

Kenya's growing tragedy

Bernice P. Jackson



Those of us old enough to remember Pan Africanism, the dream of one, free Africa which was voiced by those early leaders of newly-liberated African nations, will recall Jomo Kenyatta, the impressive and majestic first President of Kenya. Along with Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Leopold Senghor of Senegal, these leaders represented the best of the Motherland.

The Kenya of today is very different from that dream. A recent report by Amnesty International provides evidence of torture, deaths, ill-treatment and the denial of medical care to prisoners, especially political prisoners, in Kenya. In addition, it found that human rights abuses against women reflect a pattern of repression in Kenya and it has received reports that refugees from Uganda, Somalia and Rwanda are being harassed and tortured by Kenyan security forces.

The Amnesty International report found that investigations into torture by the police are rare and that many prisoners are tortured and then denied medical attention for many days. Kenyan police and security forces often beat prisoners with sticks, fists, handles of hoes and guns butts. Some political detainees have had their fingernails and toenails pulled out. Both men and women have been subjected to sexual humiliation.

Women, Amnesty has found, have been harassed, raped, tortured and killed. Those women who are government critics, opposition activists, members of the human rights movement and relatives of government opponents especially have been targeted.

Several women political prisoners have been sexually abused while imprisoned. Meetings of women's groups have been violently broken up, including a June, 1994 meeting in which 100 women were beaten by police.

Kenyan police and security forces seem to have focussed on political activists and

opponents of President Daniel Arap Moi's government. For example, Geoffrey Ndungu Gichuki, one of 67 arrested on Kenya's Independence Day in 1994 on suspicion of holding an illegal meeting, was found to have developed gangrene after being tied to a tree and beaten. He later lost his arm.

Similarly, Koigi wa Wamwere, human rights activist and former member of the Kenyan parliament; his brother, Charles Kuria Wamwere, and G.G. Njunguna Ngengi, a local councillor - all critics of the Moi government - faced the death penalty on charges of robbery after they were alleged to have raided a police station in 1993. After much international pressure, the death penalty charge was dropped, but all three were sentenced to four years in jail and six strokes of the cane after a 16-month trial.

The rights of assembly, association, conscience and free expression are guaranteed in the Kenyan constitution. But the promises are hollow and the dreams of Jomo Kenyatta are meaningless as long as the government of Daniel Arap Moi violates the rights of its citizens.

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

Giving N.C.'s communities a boost

By Abdul Sm Rasheed
SPECIAL TO THE POST

On April 3, North Carolinians observed Community Economic Development Day. I hope the celebration will cause citizens all across the state to give their communities a hard look to determine if there are neighborhoods which need a special boost.

There is hardly a town that doesn't have a low-resource neighborhood where residential and commercial districts have deteriorated and problems abound. That's the bad news. The good news is that there are programs which are helping turn around blighted neighborhoods and give them a second lease on life. And many are operated by Community Development Corporations, such as Northwest Corridor CDC and Reid Park Associates, which are located in this community.

CDCs are community-based, non-profit organizations which believe that economic development - not hand outs - are the key to creating individual opportunities and breathing new life into run-down, low resource neighborhoods. The organization I lead - the North Carolina Community

Development Initiative - helps Northwest Corridor CDC, Reid Park Associates and nearly 20 other CDCs by providing funds to pay core staff and the expertise to develop and execute programs. We want CDCs to spend their time improving communities and peoples' lives, not struggling from month-to-month to pay staff salaries or light bills. And they do it through partnerships which involve the entire community.



Rasheed

The Initiative and CDCs bring together a broad cross-section of people who see the common good that is the fruit of the labor of CDCs. Perhaps for the first time in the history of our state, we have poor people and bankers, Democrats and Republicans, conservatives and liberals, city dwellers and rural folk all coming together on community economic development projects to find workable solutions to problems that have

baffled us for generations. No wonder that we are celebrating Community Economic Development Day for the first time this year.

In many local communities, government leaders who earlier were skeptical are now enthusiastic partners with local CDCs. Businesses, especially banks, have invested in the work of CDCs all across North Carolina, helping to create affordable housing and finance commercial development. They are staying involved and even expanding their roles because they believe in community economic development and see their investments as advancing desirable social objectives, as well as having the potential for solid financial returns. From the Blue Ridge to the coast, local, citizen-based CDCs are seeing firsthand the fruits of their work as people are moving out of public housing and into home ownership; off public assistance and into productive jobs; out of despair and into self-respect and self-reliance.

Northwest Corridor Community Development Corporation in Charlotte is planning a \$1.5 million office and retail complex, and a \$3.4 million, 55,000 square foot

shopping center is already under construction in an area that once was a site of urban blight and crime. Businesses will create 100 jobs, and the development will contribute \$17,000 annually in property taxes.

UDVDC in Durham has developed a 91-acre industrial park which contains 11 buildings and 14 companies, has 550 employees and a 40,000 square-foot incubator for start-up companies. There are many other examples I could use.

All these projects are partnerships which usually depend upon some federal or state funds, investments from the private sector, and the determination of local communities to revitalize neighborhoods and create new opportunities for low resource persons. It is especially important that state and federal legislators understand what a key role they play in the partnership.

I hope Community Economic Development Day will impress upon both private citizens and public officials what investors such as Wachovia Bank, NationsBank, BB&T, Southern National, GE Capital Mortgage Corp.,

Centura Bank, First Union, CP&L, First Citizens, as well as the state of North Carolina and the U.S. Congress already have discovered - community economic development is a sound principle and investments in low resource communities can be profitable while strengthening the fabric of the entire community.

Local awareness of the important role which community development corporations, such as Northwest Corridor CDC and Reid Park Associates, are playing across the state and nation, and the great potential they hold for solving such tough problems as inadequate housing, lack of jobs and job skills, urban blight and accompanying crime is essential. Support follows awareness, and the resulting public-private community economic development partnerships provide solutions.

Want to know more? You may contact Northwest Corridor CDC at 378-1272 or Reid Park Associates at 344-1864. Or you may contact the North Carolina Community Development Initiative in Raleigh at (919) 467-5959 or fax (919) 467-5779.

ABDUL SM RASHEED is president of the Raleigh-based Initiative.



U.S. drug policy is a matter of much too little, much too late

By Linn Washington
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

Amid much fanfare, President Clinton and Vice President Gore on March 7 hosted a one-day summit titled "Youth Drug Use and Violence in America" to call attention to and issue recommendations about the related problems of teen violence and the skyrocketing use of illegal drugs by our nation's youth.

It needs to be asked why it has taken an election year for President Clinton to discover that America's drug problem has reached crisis levels. The evidence that drug use among teenagers has been rising during Clinton's term of office is overwhelming and has been obvious for some time. Indeed, the statistics are staggering:

- The rate of monthly illicit drug use by children aged 12-17 increased 56 percent from 1992 to 1994, according to the Clinton Administration's own estimates.

- The Justice Department reported in September 1995 that 1 of every 3 juvenile detainees was under the influence of drugs at the time of the offense.

- A December 1995 survey found that cocaine use by those in grades 9 through 12 had increased 36 percent since 1992, and use of hallucinogens had increased by 75 percent.

- Between 1992 and 1994, the rate of marijuana use among children 12-17 nearly doubled, according to the National Survey on Drug Use.

Until now, President Clinton has paid little attention to what most Americans have recognized all along to be a national crisis. Despite the tough talk and finger pointing at the drug summit, the Clinton Administration's response to America's drug

problem has been abysmal. A quick look at the facts:

- In his first year in office, Clinton cut his drug policy staff by 85 percent.

- Last year, the Clinton Administration proposed cutting more than 100 drug prosecutors from the U.S. attorney's offices and cutting funding for drug interdiction and drug intelligence programs.

- The Drug Enforcement Agency trained no special agents in 1993, and none were budgeted to be trained in 1994 or 1995.

- Attorney General Janet Reno announced soon after taking office that she wanted to reduce mandatory minimum sentences for drug trafficking and related crimes. Not surprisingly, the number of federal prosecutions has been dropping.

- And who can forget Clinton's own Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, who advocated legalizing drugs in order to reduce the crime rate. Just last month, the Clinton Administration's misplaced priorities were on display again. After visiting an elementary school in one of Philadelphia's most crime-plagued and drug-infested neighborhoods, Hillary Rodham Clinton in a speech later that evening called on the government to protect teenagers from the tobacco industry and pushed for a television rating system. Two issues no doubt, but hardly the answer to the scourge of drugs and violence in our neighborhoods.

In announcing his drug summit last November, President Clinton stated that it is important to counter messages that tell children it is "cool, sexy, attractive to drink or get high." He will surely want to explain then why, when asked on MTV in 1992 if he would inhale marijuana if

he had to do it over again, he responded to laughter. "Sure, if I could. I tried it before."

President Clinton's total lack of leadership in the war on drugs over the past three years should cause all Americans to view skeptically his embrace of the issue for an election year. The tragedy is that prior to his election in 1992, America was winning the war on drugs. Even NBC News reported that "Just Say No" was an effective message in the 1980s.

Then, presidential leadership was highly visible, tough effective. And as a consequence, drug use plummeted. Between 1985 and 1992, overall drug use was cut in half. The number of cocaine users dropped from 5.8 million to 1.8 million. The number of marijuana users fell from a high of 54.2 percent in 1979 to 27.1 percent in 1992.

The reason? Children were continually bombarded with the message that drugs were wrong. Dealers were put on notice that peddling drug to kids would not be tolerated. And both the Bush and the Reagan administrations pursued tough drug enforcement and interdiction policies.

Sadly those trends have been reversed in just three years. Any progress that we as a nation were making in curtailing drug use has been destroyed because the Clinton Administration fled the field of battle and has been missing ever since.

President Clinton's drug summit was an indication that his pollsters can recognize a campaign issue. But we demand more than campaign events and photo opportunities from our president. The lives of millions of our young people are at stake.

MALCOLM WALLOP is a retired Republican U.S. senator from Wyoming.

Thanks for help with Young banquet

The writer is president of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Urban League.

On behalf of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Urban League Board of Directors, staff, members and friends, I wish to extend a heartfelt "thank you" for your participation in our third annual Whitney M. Young, Jr. Award Dinner. This event was our annual fundraiser and proved to be a phenomenal success because of partners like you.

Your generous in-kind contribution in the form of media coverage has been duly noted and recorded.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Urban League is an agency that invests in people, particularly those who are not part of the economic mainstream. Your in-kind support of education and training programs provided by the Urban League has been invaluable in successfully moving hundreds of people from unemployment to employment.

The return on your investment and your partnership with the Urban League will once again prove to be...an opportunity for someone, with your help, to receive a new beginning.

*Madine Hester Fails
Charlotte*

Ron Goodwin is a friend of Charlotte

The Males Place, in collaboration with Teen Age Parents Services School and Mr. Ron Goodwin and his fine staff at the Renaissance Place Restaurant have sponsored a series of fatherhood conferences. It showed that through the spirit of collective work and responsibility, a significant impact can be made in dealing with some of our society's most troubling issues such as adolescent pregnancy and male responsibility.

During the months of November, December and most recently in March, Mr. Goodwin graciously hosted the fatherhood conferences. This event attracted a large number of males, teens and other individuals. Some topics included: "Responsibility: The basis of Manhood and Fatherhood," "Parenting," "Fatherhood from a Spiritual Perspective," "The Social, Legal and Cultural Implications of Fathering" and "The Making of a 'Good' Man and 'Strong' Father."

There were obviously many reasons for the success of the conferences. However, the most important was the high level of commitment and support from Mr. Goodwin and his staff.

I am grateful to Mr. Goodwin and to others like him who are truly interested in making a difference and in helping our young males develop into strong, enlightened and responsible men.

The males place and the Charlotte community could use a lot more men like Ron.

*-Reggie Singleton
Charlotte*

Tax advice touches nerve of 4th Branch

Something is wrong in North Carolina's tax structure when the N. C. Association of Certified Public Accountants are now recommending that clients all file their state income tax returns, personal and corporate, under protest demanding a refund. This recommendation came after evaluation of recent events affecting taxpayers and the NCACPA profession, that the potential for sections of the N.C. General Statutes to be declared unconstitutional by N. C. courts or the possibility they will be repealed by the General Assembly.

The 4th Branch, a coalition of organizations representing vested active or retired former federal, state and local government employees concerned about illegal taxation and now those who, in the past, diligently paid their intangible taxes, have been endeavoring to encourage incumbents and candidates for state offices to correct these injustices. Particularly the abolishment of the 30-day rule, GS 105-267, which requires a taxpayer to protest his tax within 30 days of payment.

*Manila G. Shaver
West End, N.C.*

What's on your mind?

Send your comments to The Charlotte Post, P.O. Box 30144, Charlotte, N.C. 28230 or fax (704) 342-2160. You can also use E-mail - charpost@clt.mindspring.com

All correspondence must include a daytime telephone