

Message to young brothers

Bernice P. Jackson



The poet T.S. Eliot once wrote that April is the cruelest month. When it comes to African American men, Eliot was certainly right.

On April 4, 28 years after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., we lost three black men of excellence, three black men who were pioneers and role models and leaders not just for black America, but for all America. Within 24 hours we lost Carl Stokes, Haywood Burns and Ron Brown. Rev. Jesse Jackson, at the funeral of Carl Stokes said, "God was lining up his giants."

Carl Stokes was the first African American elected mayor of a major American city.

We have so many African American elected officials now that it is hard for you to know the feeling of pride and excitement on that November day in 1967. But Carl Stokes' election was hard-fought and it was only the power of his charismatic smile, quick wit and intelligence that enabled his victory. After his political career, he went on to become a municipal judge, a television commentator and finally, a United States ambassador. Carl Stokes lived a life of excellence.

Carl Stokes, Haywood Burns and Ron Brown all came from humble roots. But they were men who did not internalize their ghetto limitations and the defined roles that society had placed on them as black men. "They turned bitter into better," said Rev. Jackson at the Stokes funeral.

Now it's up to you, our young black brothers, to pick up the mantle, to strive for excellence, to ignore the stereotypes and to never forget the dreams and aspirations of your people. You have big shoes to fill. But if you do, then their living will not have been in vain.

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Why are so many sisters in prison?

By Earl O. Hutchinson
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER
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Some years ago, I briefly worked as a social worker. Occasionally, I would visit clients in jail to determine their eligibility for continued benefits. They were all men — with one exception.

She was a young black woman serving time for theft. She had two small children. She entered the visiting room handcuffed to another woman dressed in drab prison garb. We talked through a reinforced glass window. The guards stared hard and barked out gruff commands to the women. The idea of a woman in prison was a novelty to me then. It isn't today.

The number of women arrested for serious felonies leaped from 12,331 in 1960 to 62,936 in 1992. Since 1992, the percent of women imprisoned soared 275 percent, nearly doubling the percentage increase in men jailed. Black women have been hit the hardest. More are now behind bars than at any time in American history. They fill jails in greater percentages than black men and are seven times more likely to be imprisoned than white women. Yet

many Americans still believe that mostly men, especially black men, are locked up.

The media continually reminds the public that one out of three young black men is in prison, on probation or parole. They make up half the prison population in America. I counted nearly 100 features in major metropolitan newspapers between 1992 and October 1995 on the plight of young black males in or facing prison. During the same period, there were three articles on women in prison and none specifically on black women in prison. Black women have almost single-handedly expanded the prison-industrial complex.

From 1930 to 1950, five women's prisons were built nationally. During the 1980s, 34 were built. Even this hasn't kept pace with the swelling number of women prisoners. Women's prisons are understaffed, overcrowded, lack recreation facilities, serve poor quality food, suffer chronic shortages of family planning counselors and services, obstetric and gynecological specialists, drug treatment and child care facilities, and transportation funds for family visits. A century ago researchers claimed that crim-

inally-inclined women had enlarged craniums, or malformed bones or were natural sexual deviants. Today we laugh at this, but some experts still propagate myths about women and crime.

Myth: Women commit violent crimes for the same reasons that men do.

Fact: Women are less likely than men to assault or murder strangers while committing crimes. Two-thirds of the women jailed assaulted or killed relatives or intimates. Their victims were often spouses, lovers or boyfriends. In many cases they committed violence defending themselves against sexual or physical abuse.

Myth: The women's movement encouraged assertiveness and competition among women. This weakened traditional family values.

Fact: The majority of black women jailed are poor, lack education and job skills. The goals of the women's movement were largely geared toward middle-class, career business and professional advancement. Poor black women gained little, middle-class, white and black women gained the most from this. Also more than 80 percent of women prisoners have children

(9 percent give birth while in prison). These women did not reject traditional family relations. They and their children were rejected by husbands and lovers. More black women are behind bars for these reasons:

- Crime and hard punishment. One out of three crimes committed by women is drug-related. Many state and federal sentencing laws mandate minimum sentences for all drug offenders. This virtually eliminates the option of referring non-violent, first time offenders to increasingly scarce, financially strapped drug treatment, counseling and education programs. Stiffer punishment for black cocaine users than for whites will insure that more black women land in prison.

- The feminization of poverty. More than one out of three black women has an income below the poverty level. One out of seven is unemployed. One out of two is a single parent. One out of three is employed in a low wage, semi or unskilled service job. One out of three did not complete high school.

- The racial stereotyping of black men. Black men are media-typed as violent, drug dealing "gangstas." Black

women are typed as sexually loose, conniving, untrustworthy, welfare queens. Many of the mostly middle-class judges and jurors believe that black women offenders are menaces to society, too. The quantum leap in black women behind bars has wreaked severe damage on black family relations.

Their 167,000 children are raised by grandparents, or warehoused in foster homes and institutions.

Many children of imprisoned women drift into delinquency, gangs and drug use. This perpetuates the vicious cycle of poverty, crime and violence. With the public locked in a "harsh punishment vice," lawmakers will not increase funding for job training, skills drug treatment, education, child care and health, and parenting skills programs. But this is still the best way to keep more black women from winding up behind bars.

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Affirmative action set for a fall

By Michael Byrne
SPECIAL TO THE POST

RALEIGH — The Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals' March decision in Hopwood v. Texas declared a minority-preference program at the University of Texas Law School unconstitutional. Considering other recent court decisions, Hopwood places university minority-preference programs, including those in North Carolina, in jeopardy.

Since 1978's Supreme Court case Regents of the University of California v. Bakke, universities could legally consider race as a "factor" in admissions. In Bakke, Justice William Powell reasoned that seeking a "diverse" student body could be a "compelling interest," permitting otherwise unconstitutional racial classifications. Powell believed that "benign" or "remedial" discrimination — against whites, benefitting minorities — is "different" than the reverse.

Bakke is the linchpin of university minority-preference

programs across the U.S. UNC's affirmative action admissions policy is based on the Bakke decision. In fact, the UNC Law School application even contains chunks of the Bakke decision reprinted verbatim.

In recent years, the Supreme Court has reexamined the notion of promoting racial equality through racial discrimination. Two cases, 1989's City of Richmond v. J.A. Croson and 1995's Adarand Constructors v. Peña, gave serious blows to affirmative action programs.

The cases made clear that racial classifications, "benign" or otherwise, must automatically be presumed unconstitutional. Unless the classification serves a "compelling government interest" and is "narrowly tailored to accomplish that interest," it is unlawful.

What does this mean for North Carolina? UNC's preference programs are under fire. A lawsuit recently filed in federal court challenges UNC's "Minority Presence Grants" — payments to minorities who

attend historically-white UNC institutions as well as payments to white students who attend historically-black UNC schools. In the wake of Hopwood, defense of such programs is much more difficult.

Hopwood exposes the constitutionally rotten foundation of race-based admissions. It is an acknowledgment, as the Supreme Court noted in Croson and Adarand, that equal protection applies to all races. UNC could take the high road and change to color-blind programs before being forced to do so at the cost of untold taxpayer dollars. Published statements suggest, however, that UNC administrators will continue to stand in the schoolhouse door, exclaiming: "Racial preferences today, racial preferences tomorrow, racial preferences forever."

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An unfulfilled promise to African Americans

By Claud Anderson
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER
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Economic affirmative action for black Americans is morally justifiable and is still needed. Affirmative action policies were initially instituted to level the playing field for the black race.

Today's public policies have amorphous goals that fail to address the original Constitutional intent. The newer policy equates blacks to women and non-statutorily handicapped ethnics. Unlike these groups, blacks are locked into the lowest level of a real-life Monopoly game. Blacks were left out of the original distribution of wealth resources at the beginning of the game and it is extremely difficult for them to compete or win. Blacks play the game but whites control or own nearly 100 percent of this nation's income, wealth, businesses, resources, powers, privileges and government. Black America is so far behind the starting line that the outcomes of any socio-economic competition are racially foreordained. Voting "thumbs up" or "down" on this nation's affirmative action policy should not be a difficult task. The current policy is so off target and diluted with gender

and ethnic groupings that even if it were terminated, blacks would lose very little.

Contrary to popular belief, white society receives directly and indirectly the greatest benefit from affirmative action. White women consistently receive the lion's share of benefits even though they co-own, control, influence, have access to, or will inherit nearly 100 percent of the possessions of white males. Hispanic immigrants, like white women, get double benefits and are the second largest beneficiary group. Free of the legacies of slavery, segregation and racism, Hispanics compete with blacks in minority programs even though 85 percent of all Hispanics are classified as whites.

The conservative backlash to affirmative action for black Americans is not new. There is a historical and natural antithesis between conservatism and affirmative action.

History shows that every time the black race has attempted to alter its life conditions, conservatism arose to reassert and reconfirm white values, authority, and dominance. Conservatives have long defended the status quo, accepting advantages and privileges for whites, and the systematic subordination and

deprivation of blacks, as the norm. The mere mention of any policy or device to alter the foreordained conditions of blacks can trigger anger and strike a nerve in conservative whites.

Most of white society lives in a state of denial about how their race acquired its wealth and resources. Most conservatives ignore the historical reality that racial discrimination against blacks constituted preferential treatment for whites, and that Jim Crow segregation was nothing more than a 100-year set-aside policy that reserved the best jobs, schools, neighborhoods and business opportunities for whites only. They refuse to acknowledge that the advantages and privileges they enjoy today are the direct legacies of black slavery and Jim Crow segregation. They pretend not to understand that any present day removal of barriers against blacks is simply a removal of unjustifiable, preferential advantages for whites. Understandably, conservatives now argue for a color-blind society simply to avoid giving preferential treatment to blacks.

The 13th, 14th, and 15th constitutional amendments were the first affirmative action policy for blacks and ended slavery and gave blacks

political and civil rights. But, all corrective action for blacks was cut short. Conservative whites enacted "black codes" in the 1870s that denied blacks not only their "40 acres and mule" but the freedoms and civil rights promised in the Constitutional amendments.

President Lyndon B. Johnson attempted to recapture the spirit and intent of the constitutional amendments and all the subsequent civil rights laws for blacks. In 1965, he proposed compensatory economic resources to black Americans so that they could overcome the effects of historical discrimination and injustices imposed on them by the dominant society.

Black America can respond to the affirmative action debate in several ways. It can reject the current policy and seek black reparations similar to that received by Native Americans, Jews, indentured white servants, and Japanese Americans; seek modifications that exclude gender and ethnic groups...Or, it can continue to spend political capital supporting a policy that gives few benefits.

CLAUD ANDERSON is author of "Black Labor, White Wealth."

Letters to The Post

Sound the alarm

Is it me or does it appear that some of our young people are more interested in their right to cruise and having Freaknik than to develop strategies to mount a challenge to the current right wing movements in this country?

Does it appear that our political elders are more interested in the next bachelor auction or banquet than preparing and nurturing young leaders to carry the black struggle into the next millennium?

For those who think that I might be cynical or an alarmist, I will just mention a few names: The Freeman, the Christian Identity Movement, and the patriot and militia movement. Who are these groups and why should the black community be concerned? Well, people, just like our ancestors had to be aware of the Klan and White Citizens Council, we must be aware of these groups who are far more dangerous and evil than a bunch of rednecks in pickup trucks. These domestic terrorist groups are made up of armed, angry white men who believe that white people are being systematically oppressed by an illegal, totalitarian government intent on disarming it and creating a one world government. They declare war on the federal government. An example of their handiwork is the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City last year, in which 168 people perished.

Another target of their rage is the Jewish and black community, or mud people as we are known in hate group circles. According to their twisted beliefs, Jews were spawned of Satan and black people are sub-human and there will be a war. And the Aryans will destroy blacks and Jews and overthrow the government.

Scary stuff, but these groups are out there planning and building while in our community we are debating our rights to cruise or dance on the hood of a car at an embarrassment called Freaknik.

With the NAACP convention coming to town in a couple of months, this would be an excellent opportunity for local leadership to put on the table a discussion on the black community response to these racist movements that are popping up like crabgrass all over the country.

Robert D. Hampton
Charlotte

“ Now it's up to you, our young black brothers to pick up the mantle, to strive for excellence, to ignore the stereotypes and to never forget the dreams and aspirations of your people. You have big shoes to fill. But if you do, then their living will not have been in vain. ”