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Using 'massa' to mis-educate black children

By Celia Daniels
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

"I pray that the teachers of my children will be godly men and women of integrity."

From "Prayers That Avail Much, Vol. II."

It all started with a phone call from my nephew, a third-grader in a suburban Chicago school, who wanted help with a reading assignment. As he began to read from his book, I was shocked by the storyline that was unfolding about George Washington and his slaves. I summoned his mother to the telephone and as she began to read the tale, I could hear the disbelief building in her voice as we both tried to understand why in 2004 her son was reading a book published in 1942 about life on the plantation.

As you might expect, the family homework hotline was heating up that cold January Monday, the day the nation honors Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

She continued to question her son about his homework, only to learn that he also had to write a definition of slavery and draw a slave doing his chores.

By now, the Chicago branch of the family hotline was on fire, with "Auntie C" suggesting a few drawings showing the slaves burning down the master's house.

Over in the sixth grade, things weren't much better. We discovered that the students were going to learn about slavery by watching the movie "Uncle Tom's Cabin," based on the novel by White abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe, who even in 1852 recognized the evils of slavery.

The teacher, however, had a different spin on America's greatest sin. He told the class: "Slavery is not a sin because God allowed slaves in the Bible. Besides, do you think that White people just rowed over there [to Africa] and gathered up all the Black people? No, because other Black people helped by selling them."

If the teachers at this school in Bolingbrook, Ill., needed help in designing a lesson plan or purchasing materials, they could have stopped by their local bank, grocery, dry cleaner, or funeral home and picked up a free "Black History" calendar chock full of the achievements and contributions African-Americans have made. And there are always the PBS specials.

But this school and its teachers were not strapped for cash. This is Calvary Christian School, a private institution run by the Assemblies of God Church.

"This statement is no longer about the Christian viewpoint or made for historical effect, it is purely designed to justify a wrong by diverting the blame," the mother said of the teacher's lesson on slavery.

At CCS, two or three black staff members, which is all the school has, asked the mother why she objected to the books and the movie. They even defended this white teacher who refused to meet with the mother despite repeated requests from her to discuss alternative reading materials. He did manage to say through his black surrogates that he "was misunderstood and this wasn't about politics."

In letters to the teacher and school officials, the mother said, "I refuse to allow [my son] in a setting where young children, uncomfortable with what they are watching, are joking, snickering and making inappropriate comments while he is the only other African-American they see besides the ones in the movies who are slaves."

But this white teacher didn't see any harm in showing the movie and sent a copy of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" home for the family to review, pointing out that it features Phylcia Rashad and Avery Brooks, as if that would make slavery easier to swallow.

The third-grader was shocked that Christians could be so cruel to one another. "Why are they beating black people," he asked after watching the movie? The older boy made it clear that he did not want to be in the classroom when Black people were called "colored" and "nigga," grown men called "boys," and families separated and sold.

It's also a sin and a shame that many hard-working black parents are paying good money — thousands of dollars in tuition — for a bad education not only in suburban Chicago but also across this nation. Black parents send their children to church-affiliated schools to instill religious fundamentals and principles, but they must not let their guard down just because a child attends a private school.

"Parents must stay involved because some will try to hide behind religion," to further their agenda, the mother reminds us. "Don't assume you don't need to look over your child's work."

Weeks later, the parents' vigilance paid off. Back in the third grade, the teacher pulled the George Washington book and the drawings of slaves on master's plantation and replaced them with an assignment on the masterpieces of African-American folk artist Horace Pippin. Over in the sixth grade, they never saw the movie and the older boy went to the school library, as his had parents requested, during discussions on slavery.

The "misunderstood" teacher said he only meant to "spark debate" among the students. The principal said the teacher really believes that "slavery is morally wrong." The church, pastor and principal have agreed to review CCS's curriculum and "not to offend any races in the future."

Which is what the debate is about, the future — the future of all the children.

CELIA DANIELS is a Chicago-based journalist.

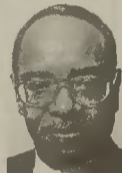
AN APPLE FOR DR. PUGHESLEY

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Johnson sells horses; is CIAA next?

As I See It
GERALD O. JOHNSON



Bob Johnson, owner of the Charlotte Bobcats, held a reception at his downtown penthouse a couple weeks back to announce the horse show-jumping competition he is bringing to Charlotte. The event will be held April 9-11 at the Charlotte Coliseum. The Charlotte Jumper Classic will be an annual event. The new downtown arena will host the event once it is completed.

What fascinated me even more than the announcement about the event was the diverse crowd the reception drew. Quite a few of the guests wouldn't know a show-jumping horse from a jackass, but they were enthusiastic about this event

coming to Charlotte. Initially, I thought it was because they were taking part in a high-class event. But as I mingled through the crowd, I realized it was something stronger than that.

Then I thought maybe they have had too much to drink. Then I noticed, not everybody was drinking.

Then we were asked to be quiet because Johnson was about to speak. Bob got up and gave a welcoming and a brief talk about the equestrian event and what he was trying to do and what this event would do for Charlotte. There was nothing spectacular about the speech, yet the entire crowd seemed somewhat mesmerized by the talk. Then it hit me. The crowd was not here for the

horses, they were here for Bob. It wouldn't have mattered if he was pushing a bumper car derby, the crowd would have been just as enthusiastic. I have no doubt the equestrian event will be successful because Charlotte is going to support Bob.

Consequently, as I was leaving the CIAA tournament the other week, I couldn't help but think of how Bob's charisma could be used to lure that event to Charlotte. The CIAA is accepting bids for hosting the tournament for the next three years starting in 2006. Raleigh's current contract ends with the 2005 tournament. Charlotte should have the new downtown arena built. Bob Johnson's new television network venture will be well on the way (regional sporting events is high on the radar screen for the network). We have more than enough nearby hotel capacity to be attractive to tournament organizers. The

stars appear to be properly aligning to finally make this happen.

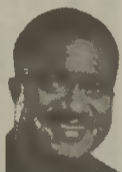
However, we are dealing with the CIAA. We have put together some decent proposals in the past just to be told, "nice try, maybe next time." I know Raleigh will push very hard to keep the tournament. Washington, D.C., and Atlanta will put forth very strong bids to lure this very prestigious event. But none of them have our hold card: Bob Johnson.

If we haven't already, we need to put together a strong team of individuals to go after this event. Bob Johnson should be asked to throw his hat in the ring to help make it happen. The tournament organizing committee will announce the next event host in September. With the right proposal we stand a very good chance to make it happen.

GERALD O. JOHNSON is publisher of *The Post*.

Right to remain silent under attack

GEORGE E. CURRY



For more than three decades, law enforcement officials have had to advise anyone suspected of a crime that they have a right to remain silent, that they are entitled to have a lawyer present during questioning even if they can't afford one and that anything they say can be used against them in court.

Those are collectively known as one's Miranda Rights. The United States Supreme Court issued its ruling in 1966 protecting those safeguards in the case of *Miranda v. Arizona* and ordered a new trial for Ernesto Miranda.

Still, various efforts have been mounted to chip away at Miranda's broad protection.

Two months ago, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled in a Nebraska case that suspects must be told of their right to see a lawyer before police try to obtain a confession from them. The case has been remanded and John Fellers, who argued his case all the way to the Supreme Court, will get an opportunity to have his 12-year federal sentence reversed.

His case, *Fellers v. United States*, involved the distribution of methamphetamine.

In a different challenge to Miranda, the Supreme Court has agreed to hear a case out of Nevada involving the right to remain silent. The case began on the evening of May 21, 2000 when a bystander telephoned the Humboldt County Sheriff's Department in Winnemucca, Nev. to report that the driver of a pick-up truck was striking his female companion.

According to court documents, Deputy Lee Dove responded to the scene and was directed to a truck parked on the side of Grass Valley Road. Larry Hiibel was standing next to the truck. The deputy approached Hiibel and asked him to identify himself. After Hiibel chose to remain silent each time he was asked to give his name, Deputy Dove handcuffed Hiibel and placed him under arrest. Hiibel was later convicted of delaying an officer, a crime under Nevada law. He was never tried or convicted on any other charge.

The Supreme Court of Nevada was sharply split in its 4-3 decision finding Hiibel guilty. The four judges in the majority said it was constitutional to arrest Hiibel for exercising his right to remain silent by refusing to identify himself. The three dissenting judges,

on the other hand, issued an opinion stating that "being forced to identify oneself to a police officer or else face arrest is government coercion — precisely the type of governmental intrusion that the Fourth Amendment was designed to prevent."

This case pits the power of the government to compel a citizen to speak against his or her right to remain silent or rely on the Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination.

Like many civil liberties issues, this case finds groups on the political left and right uniting to advocate on behalf of Hiibel.

In its friend-of-the-court brief, the libertarian Cato Institute observed, "If citizens have the right to voluntarily engage in conversations with police officers (and they assuredly do), they must also retain the option of declining to engage in such conversations — especially when the law enforcement agents are employing interrogation tactics that are purposely designed to have the citizen waive his right to reject a consensual stop or search or his right to silence."

It continued, "If the government can criminalize citizen silence, citizens will no longer be able to rely upon their own wits when they find themselves confronted with law enforcement agents. There would simply be too much legal jeopardy."

Ernesto Miranda, whose case spawned the landmark ruling, was given a second trial after the court ruled that he had not been properly advised of his rights. During his initial interrogation in 1963, which involved charges that he had stolen \$8 from a Phoenix bank, Miranda not only admitted to the theft but also kidnapping and raping an 18-year-old female 11 days earlier, according to police. During the questioning, Miranda was never read his rights.

After the Supreme Court sent the case back for retrial, Miranda was convicted again of kidnapping and rape. He served 11 years and was paroled from prison in 1972. Four years later, Miranda got into a fight and was stabbed to death. Ironically, his suspected attacker was set free, in part, because he chose to assert his Miranda rights of silence.

If Miranda's suspected killer can remain silent, the Supreme Court may have a hard time saying Hiibel could not maintain his silence in the face of unwanted police questioning.

GEORGE E. CURRY is editor-in-chief of the *NNPA News Service* and *BlackPressUSA.com*. His most recent book is "The Best of *Emerge Magazine*," an anthology published by Ballantine Books. He can be reached through his Web site, georgecurry.com.