

# Forum

## 'Mississippi Burning' distorts history

NEW YORK -- The film "Mississippi Burning" is currently receiving national media attention. The movie, about the murder of Chaney, Schwerner and Goodman, three civil rights workers in Mississippi in 1964, recently captured the cover of *Time* magazine. It has also been reviewed extensively in every major daily newspaper wherever the film has opened.

Many film reviewers are acclaiming the film. These reviewers conveniently miss the movie's major fault. "Mississippi Burning" elevates the FBI to heroic proportions when, in truth, that agency was more a part of the problem than a part of the solution.

At the same time, the film totally ignores the very people who were heroic -- the civil rights activists who built a movement in Mississippi. In the movie, Afro-Americans are simply background, and the movement is nonexistent.

A recent edition of CBS-TV's "Nightwatch" program aired a discussion by three civil rights workers from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee who worked in Mississippi in 1964. Their comments showed clearly how grossly the role of the FBI

was distorted in the film.

June Johnson, whose family was long a bulwark of the movement in Greenwood, Miss., spoke of the FBI's collusion with the local Mississippi police. She

organizers, he asked in panic, "Why are you all here? You'll get us all killed."

Judy Richardson, veteran SNCC organizer and associate television producer of the second



### CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

By BENJAMIN CHAVIS JR.

recalled that when she was only 14 years old she was brutally beaten in Winona, Miss., along with civil rights activists Fannie Lou Hamer, Lawrence Buyot and Annette Ponder. Local law enforcement officers were responsible for the beating, yet the FBI suggested to the activists, their faces swollen and bruised, that they had actually attacked each other.

Another panelist, Bob Zellner, told of accompanying Rita Schwerner, wife of one of the slain civil rights workers, to the site of the disappearance, where they were chased by a white mob to a local motel, where investigating FBI agents were staying.

When the FBI agent opened the door and recognized the two

"Eyes on the Prize," stressed the indomitable courage of the local Afro-American community in Mississippi, who housed civil rights workers investigating the disappearance of their three missing colleagues.

It is up to all of us to correct the record. We must make sure that wherever the film is shown, the media is encouraged to report the true story of Mississippi in 1964 and today.

We must not allow the real history of Mississippi and the civil rights movement to be "burned" by this movie.

Benjamin F. Chavis Jr. is executive director of the Commission for Racial Justice of the United Church of Christ.

## The battle of a two-pound baby

WASHINGTON -- The scene is the Children's Hospital Neonatal Intensive Care Ward.

In an incubator in a large, bright room filled with nurses and equipment, tiny "Jason" is fighting for his life.

Six weeks after he was born, Jason weighs two pounds, six ounces. He has come a very long way. At birth -- three months before he was due -- Jason weighed just over one pound.

Jason lives because tubes connect his lungs and every available vein to the many machines that are needed to feed him and keep him warm and enable him to take his next breath.

It is quiet in Jason's corner. A baby can be heard crying across the room, but because a breathing tube runs down his throat, little Jason cannot cry. When his heart rate slows, a monitor beeps to alert the nurse.

"Minimal handling," says the sign on Jason's incubator. He is too fragile to be touched very much. He has been through

### CHILDWATCH

By MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

surgery to enable doctors to insert an intravenous feeding needle. He has a heart problem. And he has already suffered seizures because of damage to his nervous system caused by bleeding into his head.

Jason will perhaps live his life with mental handicaps because of the bleeding, the nurse says.

Jason waves his tiny arms and legs. His thin hands clasp and unclasp the warmed air inside the box that has been his only home. "He's a cute little kid," the nurse remarks.

Prematurity such as Jason's can result from a number of complex medical and social problems that affect a mother's health and her pregnancy. What exactly led to Jason's premature birth will never be known. We do know, however, that unless a mother receives early and ongoing prenatal care, conditions that can lead to prematurity cannot be detected or treated.

The real tragedy of Jason the two-pound fighter is that his mother was close to five months pregnant with him before she received any prenatal care.

A growing number of black babies today face a risk of repeating Jason's tragedy because our nation is slipping backwards on providing their mothers with timely, adequate prenatal care.

According to the latest health statistics, more than one out of every 10 black births in 1986 involved a mother who got prenatal care late in her pregnancy or got no prenatal care at all.

The number of black births that occurred under these risky circumstances has gone up 20 percent since 1980. It has been the longest upturn in this negative trend since the government started keeping track of these numbers decades ago.

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## We may become AIDS suckers, victims

NEW YORK -- This week in Daytona Beach, Fla., black publishers and editors will be briefed by officials from the Centers for Disease Control on AIDS and the black community.

They will be introduced to the CDC's new media campaign, designed to change the behavior of blacks and Hispanics in order to stop the spread of AIDS. The CDC wants the Afro-American press to tell its readers that Afro-Americans account for 12 percent of the population, but 26 percent of the AIDS cases. Hispanics are 8 percent and 15 percent, respectively.

That leaves 58 percent of the cases for whites, who are 80 percent of the U.S. population. While blacks and Hispanics are being targeted and warned that drug usage and sex should be avoided and regulated, some whites are using those same statistics to prove the CDC's theory that AIDS in America came from Africans. Therefore, something should be done about blacks in America.

"AIDS is taking on a black face," declared editorial writer Bill Johnson in *The Detroit News*, a white daily. Johnson called on blacks to support mandatory AIDS testing and said the alternative may be a backlash of increased bigotry aimed at blacks.

If Afro-Americans allow themselves to be identified as the AIDS problem, they will be both miseducated and eliminated, in one form or another, from American society.

This "black" number of 26 per-

cent of the AIDS cases includes Haitian and Central African immigrants. Both of these areas received the World Health Organization's smallpox vaccine, which the *London Times* said triggered the AIDS epidemic in Central Africa and Haiti.



### TONY BROWN

Syndicated Columnist

There is no doubt that any member of any group that is seeded with the AIDS virus is more likely to develop the disease. However, Americans of African descent have not been inoculated with the virus and are not at risk -- unless they are homosexual (57 percent of AIDS cases), bisexual (18.5 percent), drug users (18 percent), have sex with members of a high-risk group or are a homosexual/bisexual/drug user (6.5 percent).

So being black does not

increase the risk for AIDS and is no more reason for mandatory testing than being white -- unless you are white and in a high-risk group, therefore more likely to carry the virus.

If mandatory testing is to be based on statistical inference, then males -- black, white, green and polka dot -- who have an exposure rate 13 times higher than females, should be singled out. Ditto for hemophiliacs, young people and people living in San Francisco and in New York (the AIDS capital of the world).

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## McDONALD'S CUTE CUPID CONTEST

For Children Ages  
9 mos. to 4 yrs.

Akron Drive  
Kernersville  
M.L. King Jr. Drive

Bring your child's entry picture to one of the above locations. You may only enter at ONE of these locations. Entry deadline is February 6th. Photo must have been made within the past 6 months, may not be larger than an 8x10 and does not have to be in color.

The Contest will be judged on  
February 14th at 6:00 p.m.  
Winners will be contacted by phone.

### Prizes At Each Location

The Winner of the "Cut Cupid" Contest will receive:

- A Trophy Commemorating the contest win.
- A Ronald McDonald Doll
- \$25.00 McDonald's Gift Certificates.

First Runner-Up and Second Runner-Up will receive:

- A Trophy
- A Ronald McDonald Doll

All other contestants will receive:

- A Certificate of Participation
- A Special Treat
- A "Be Our Guest" Card for a free order of McDonald's French Fries



There will be a reception for all contests and their family on February 14th from 6:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. at the McDonald's that your child's picture was entered.

Prizes and Pictures may be picked up at the reception.

For more information call:  
**Karen Easter at 727-0606**

McDonald's will not be responsible for Children's Pictures.