

Forum

Liberate Daufuskie Island

Off the coast of North and South Carolina, and Georgia, there is a growing "African" liberation struggle, yet millions of African-Americans and others remain relatively unaware of this struggle. The "Sea Islands" are part of a chain of small islands located less than one mile from the mainland of the southeast coast of the United States.

Hilton Head, but remains not attached to the mainland. These two islands pay taxes to Beaufort County, South Carolina. Daufuskie Island is actually very close to the port of Savannah, Georgia. Incidentally, the oldest African-American church, First African Baptist Church, is still located in Savannah, Georgia. Today on Daufuskie

racial exploitation and oppression." The National Council of Churches Unit has called for immediate Congressional hearings on the plight of the remaining natives of Daufuskie who are refusing to be driven from their homes and land. At one time there were more than a thousand African-Americans who lived on Daufuskie. Today in 1991, there are less than 75 African-Americans left on the island.

We are aware that there are some cynics who will take the position that this little island now with only less than 75 sisters and brothers should not cause enough to sound a national alarm. That view misses the point. The indigenous people of Daufuskie not only "need" our support, they "deserve" our active support. For decades, against tremendous pressures, this small band of sisters and brothers have held on to their "past, present and future" in many ways that have been lost by African-American communities besieged on the mainland throughout the United States.

The developers, mainly the Melrose Company and International Paper Company's Resorts, are now attempting to prevent the indigenous population from having even the means of vital transportation to and from the island all with the complicity of local government authorities. The Christic Institute South has filed a lawsuit on behalf of the people of Daufuskie against the myriad of injustices.

Let us work together to save the "Gullah" culture of the Sea Islands. Helping to save Daufuskie Island from destructive "development" will help us save this important people's struggle. Let us work together to help liberate Daufuskie Island.

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

By BENJAMIN F. CHAVIS JR.

The Sea Islands historically were populated by escaped or freed African slaves and their descendants for more than the last 150 years. Due to the fact that these islands were not directly attached to the mainland, the majority African-American population over the years retained a considerable degree of authentic African culture, language and traditional ways of nurturing the land and other natural resources.

Now all of this is being destroyed by the avarice and greed of large so-called "developers." In light of a tremendous national advertisement campaign, many persons have heard of the luxurious hotels, golf courses and condominiums of the "Hilton Head Islands, South Carolina resorts and "properties." Hilton Head is one of the Sea Islands where now, the indigenous population is being displaced and transformed into a post-modern servant/slave class.

Hilton Head Island is now connected to the South Carolina mainland by a bridge. Daufuskie Island is geographically located close to

Island, the nation's third oldest African-American church, Second African Union Baptist Church, is still providing indigenous leadership for the ongoing struggle for survival and liberation. It is on Daufuskie Island, in particular, that there is a need for emergency response to the rapidly changing situation on the island as the developers have now almost totally eliminated the indigenous population. This is not a case of "black land loss" but "black land rip off."

We recently joined a fact finding mission to Daufuskie Island sponsored by the Prophetic Justice Unit of the National Council of Churches. We were part of a multiracial, ecumenical delegation that spent several days investigating the Daufuskie crisis.

The Racial Justice Working Group of the Unit had journeyed to Daufuskie Island for a similar mission last year.

The Prophetic Justice Unit concluded that the crisis on Daufuskie Island represented a clear case of deliberate "cultural genocide and

An open letter to Clarence Thomas

Dear Justice Thomas:

I did not oppose your nomination, but I was not one of your supporters either. After I watched the second round of Senate Judiciary Committee hearings, however, I now believe you can be a positive

Hill, who was 25, bright, attractive and obviously going places. I hope you weren't the sleazeball characterized in her testimony, but you probably weren't the saint you'd have us believe you were either.

So when you angrily, arrogant-

think for themselves, to do for themselves, to have different ideas, and it is a message that unless you know to an older order, this is what will happen to you. You will be lynched, destroyed, caricatured by a committee of the U.S. Senate rather than hung from a tree.

Justice Thomas, welcome to the real world.

You have spent so much time trying to prove that competence not color is what makes a difference that you forgot what color you are.

Suddenly, after 43 years, after you have worked so hard to rise so far, you acknowledge that racism is as ugly and potent as ever. You acknowledge that yes, one must be competent, but unless one is an affluent white male, one must also be beware.

I believe you have a new sensitivity to those who cry racism and discrimination. I believe you can now understand that cases coming before the Court that threaten to undermine gains made by civil rights legislation are crucial because our system simply will not treat minorities, women, the handicapped and the elderly right, unless it is forced to.

I can support you because if after all you have been through, you still want to sit on the Supreme Court, you probably will be a greater champion for the rights of the oppressed than anyone ever dreamed.

Many, including myself said that this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to invest in our neglected human capital and rebuild our infrastructure through a Marshall Plan for America to make our nation competitive again.

Then, Sadaam Hussein started flinging missiles and tanks around and the picture changed. From the prospects of peace, we had the reality of war, and the peace dividend was presumed to be a major casualty of the Persian Gulf conflict.

Well, it wasn't, and it isn't. That's partly due to some of the things we learned in the war about

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AGAINST THE GRAIN

By ROOSEVELT WILSON

factor on the Court if you would take note of just a few things:

First: Understand that as a U.S. Supreme Court Justice in America, you are second only to God in passing judgment. After the High Court, unless Congress and the president can agree on new legislation, there is no other recourse for an appellant except God.

Understanding that, you must be almost God-like in your character, wisdom and attitude. During your confirmation you should have answered all questions, and without the arrogance, anger and impatience you showed in responding to the allegations of Anita Hill.

Second: While you are expected to be God-like as an associate justice, 11 years ago you were just a 32-year-old red-blooded male, working very closely with Anita

ly, vehemently and categorically denied EVERY allegation made by Hill, perhaps you protested a bit too much.

Because there is no way to prove them, I must give you the benefit of the doubt and say Hill's allegations and your denials carry at least equal weight, so they offset each other, and the harassment issue should not have been a factor in your confirmation.

Third: Justice Thomas, you testified that the allegations are "charges that play into racist, bigoted stereotypes" that you worked so hard all your life to avoid.

About the hearings, you said: "It is a national disgrace, and from my standpoint as a black American, as far as I'm concerned, it is a high-tech lynching for uppity blacks who in any way deign to

The return of the peace dividend

It seems like ancient history, but back in the days when the Cold War was melting and both sides

were agreeing to cut the arms race down to size, something emerged called the "peace dividend."

That was the assumption that coming of peaceful relations

between the superpowers would enable deep cuts in military spending that could be applied to meeting

our domestic needs.

Not that there was universal agreement. Some wanted to use the peace dividend to cut the deficit; others to cut taxes.

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TO BE EQUAL

By JOHN E. JACOB

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Blacks say little has changed in teaching African-American heritage

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Dorothy Autrey, a professor at Alabama State University, says she wasn't taught black history when she was in school — she lived it.

Growing up black in Alabama during the turbulent years that saw the "Cradle of the Confederacy" become the birthplace of the civil rights movement, Autrey attended segregated schools and graduated from all-black D.A. Smith High School in Ozark in 1965.

She went on to undergraduate studies at Tallade-

the population in this country is black and brown?" Lincoln asks.

In Montgomery County in the late 1960's, the school system staff began working on expanding the curriculum to reflect the racial diversity of the student body after desegregation.

One of the teachers who participated in the meetings, Talmadge Oswald, said the idea was to supplement textbooks and expand reading lists with the help of black educators, who had previously taught at all-black schools.

"Our community was very open to this," he recalls. "Making a curriculum that reflected all the people in the school system and the city seemed like the thing to do."

Oswald, now assistant supervisor for curriculum and instruction, said the ad hoc committee's work resulted in "a celebration of cultural diversity."

"We have moved from the time where the only curriculum materials available to us were the kind that dealt with a separate kind of history (to studying) the people of all races, countries, nations and both sexes," he said.

But Joseph Laster Sr., a black teacher who participated in the curriculum development effort, is disillusioned. "You might say I was somewhat naive to believe there was enough openness and willingness to make desegregation work," he said. Only after he entered the curriculum project did Laster become aware that what he calls "human development" was needed for white and black teachers to understand each others' needs, he said.

An advocate of teaching that encompasses the experiences of all cultures, Laster said universities and colleges training future educators give "lip service" to that ideal to satisfy accrediting agencies.

"They say, 'Yes, we have a multi-cultural component.' It might consist of allowing a one-day program to address a multi-cultural issue, but it is not embedded in the day-by-day classroom," said Laster, who now works in staff development at the state Department of Education.

Laster said textbooks tend to be eurocentric as well because publishers are trying to sell the books to mostly white school administrators.

"They made the effort of pretending to make their textbook look multi-cultural by placing pictures of black people on various pages but there is nothing substantive in the text," he said.

Laster said the failure to present an integrated look at history is rooted in still-pervasive racial fears. "There are many whites, middle-class and upper middle-class, who think having their children taught about (abolitionist) Frederick Douglass is excessively radical," he said.

John Norell, director of the Southern Center for History and Culture at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, said he sees the lack of an integrated history curriculum as part of a larger failure in teaching history.

"If you're talking about a change from the pre-civil rights era, there's been a definite change . . . at least in terms of accepting racial equality as an ideal," said Norell, who holds workshops for history teachers. "That's not to say it's taught as fully as it should be — in my opinion no subject in history is taught as fully as it ought to be."

Norell said college education majors generally do not receive a strong enough emphasis on history. "They just have a very broad outline and sometimes holes in that," he said.

Lincoln, however, says blaming the education system is a "very lame excuse. The history that is taught is European-oriented, period."

Whatever the reasons for the lack of black history in the average Alabama classroom, its effect on black students may be crucial to their development, educators say.

Laster points out that teaching is more than just presenting information to a student. The most important aspect is whether the student can relate that information to himself, he said.

"If one does not know a whole lot about himself, the possibility of a strong self-image is fleeting," Laster said.

"The student must be able to relate all this information to himself. That's the whole point of educa-

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