

Editorials & Comments

Black Visibility

By Hoyle H. Martin Sr.
Post Executive Editor

"I am an invisible man...I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids - and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me...I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination - indeed, everything and anything except me."

These words are from Ralph Ellison's best seller novel of the early 1950's, *INVISIBLE MAN*. They are a personification of the nearly five centuries of the black man's experiences with whites in Africa and the United States.

A decade later, Michael Harrington gave the contemporary invisible man form, shape and, at least temporary visibility, when he wrote, "This book (*THE OTHER AMERICAN*) is about the other American. Here are the unskilled workers, the migrant farm workers, the aged, the minorities, and all the others who live in the economic underworld... The millions who...tend to become increasingly invisible."

The historically invisible black man arises out of the myths, omissions, distortions, and categorical lies that have filled the annals of most Western writings for over 450 years. For example, until recently, the only visibility given the black man in America has been through his arrival in 1619 as a slave and as one who was a satisfied, singing,

laughing, happy-go-lucky, hard working "boy" who loved his master's way of life, that is, the myth of the loyal slave. That myth was necessary in order to justify that "peculiar institution" - slavery - in a nation that called itself the "land of the free."

What has been kept invisible through the years is that the slaves were not satisfied with their servile sub-human status. Blacks themselves contributed to this invisibility by attempting to blot out the painful memories and awareness of the atrocities of slavery. Yet, as William Raspberry has noted, blacks "needed to be reminded that slaves did, against all odds and with occasional success, resist slavery."

The need to be reminded of their past, that is, to be visible, was, and is, necessary to the black man's sense of identity, pride in his accomplishments and hopes for the future. In spite of the guilt-ridden resistance of whites, and the attempts of some blacks to forget their painful past, persistent efforts have been made through the years by the observance of "Black History Week" to remind blacks and whites of a part of their past that is vital to understanding the present and surviving through improved race relations in the future. Alex Haley's classic "novel for television," "Roots," was in many ways a visible recognition of the success of and continued need for an annual observance of the conditions and endeavors of black Americans. Black visibility clarifies the present, gives meaning to the past and offers a sense of direction for the future.

State Hires Few Blacks?

Reports by the North Carolina Black Democratic Leadership Caucus and Carolina Community News Service (CCNS) indicate that Gov. Jim Hunt's administration has employed relatively few blacks in policy making positions as of February 1.

The Caucus has met with Gov. Hunt on two occasions to request implementation of an affirmative action hiring plan that would place at least 34 blacks in policy-making positions. However, no blacks have been appointed to the highly desired Advisory Budget Commission, and blacks held none of the 54 policy level jobs in the Department of Transportation and the Department of Human Resources. Reports by CCNS indicate further that even when blacks are hired they continue to get the lower paying jobs and the record shows a continued pattern of racial discrimination against blacks in state government employment practices. For example, in level No. 1 jobs with salary ranges of \$25,000 and up, there are 480 whites and only eight blacks while level No. 7 jobs with salary ranges from \$4,000 to \$5,999 there are 481 whites and 600

blacks. The only fairly optimistic aspects of the state's employment of blacks is seen in the Attorney General's Office. That office's beginning implementation of an affirmative action plan includes 59 blacks (9.2 percent), including four lawyers, out of a staff of 635.

In addition to the depressing employment record of blacks, there is an apparent indifferent attitude within the Hunt administration about jobs for blacks. For example, H.M. Michaux, a state representative and a member of the Caucus said, "The thing that disturbs me most is that we did not know that the Governor was not going to appoint a black (to the Advisory Budget Commission) until we read it in the paper."

The record would appear to indicate that blacks have received only minimal and token employment opportunities in the current state administration. If this is an example of Jim Hunt's political rhetoric of "getting North Carolina moving again," then blacks can look for little in the way of an improved quality of life in the next four years.

BLACK HISTORY

"A RACE IS LIKE A MAN UNTIL IT USES ITS OWN TALENTS, TAKES PRIDE IN ITS OWN HISTORY, AND LOVES ITS OWN MEMORIES. IT CAN NEVER FULFILL ITSELF COMPLETELY."

JOHN W. VANDERCOOK



They Want To Know!!!

OUR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

By D. Marie Washington

Achieving Is Believing

How well children perform in school is determined by what they believe about themselves. The child who believes he is loved, gifted, bright and successful becomes all of those things. The child who believes he is despised, slow to learn, inferior and a failure fulfills every one of his beliefs.

Beliefs are like the steering wheel of a car - they are the means by which we turn toward our desired destination. If a person in Chicago wishes to arrive in Miami, he must steer the car in that direction in order to get there. It does not matter whether the car is a Rolls-Royce or a Volkswagen, or whether his traveling companions are rich or poor, if the vehicle is headed north, then that is where it will arrive unless it is turned toward another direction. When a child believes that he cannot learn, he can no more become a high achiever than a car driving towards New York will arrive in Miami. If a child's beliefs about himself are pointed in negative directions, that is where he will arrive. If his beliefs are directed toward positive ends he will get there.

When children are given many opportunities to succeed, they begin to believe they are successful. When

they are placed in positions of superiority and inferiority, they begin to believe that they are superior or inferior. When they are labelled with names which describe their mentality as defective, handicapped, or inadequate, they begin to think of themselves as defective, handicapped and inadequate.

How then, can we help children to believe that they can become successful in school when they are pointed toward failure? How can we make them believe they are created equal when they are assigned to inferior positions? How can we make children believe they are gifted, bright and intelligent when they are labelled slow, deprived and disadvantaged?

Children get their beliefs about themselves from the people around them. We, his teachers and his parents, form a mirror in which the child sees himself, and his beliefs about himself take shape according to what we believe about him. If we would help the child to form beliefs which would steer him toward a positive destination, we must first examine our own beliefs - about the child, about human beings, and about the human mind. Our own set of beliefs concerning these

things determine what we do, what we say, and how we act, and they eventually turn the child toward one direction or another.

If we believe that human beings were not created equal, and that some are really superior while others are inferior, then we will do and say the things which will help children, conform to their assigned roles of superiority and inferiority. But if we believe that all men are indeed created equal, we will treat all children as intelligent beings who have their own special learning styles and their own gifts and talents.

If we believe that the human intellect is limited in its capacity and that its potential can be measured, then we will accept such measurements as accurate and true. So will the child. But if we believe that the capability of the human intellect is as limitless as the universe, then we will reject the idea that one human being can determine the limits of another's achievements, and we will encourage children to set their goals as high as their imagination can reach. And they will.

In what direction do we want our children to go? In what direction are we steering them? What do we really believe about them?

TO BE EQUAL



Vernon E. Jordan Jr.

Black History Month

There's a degree of excitement about this year's observation of Black History Month missing from previous ones.

One reason is the feeling that the country is about to do something - anything - about getting the economy moving again and helping ensure that black people are in the mainstream of future developments. After being frozen out for the past eight years, those expectations take Black History Month out of the vacuum and make out past struggles more relevant to what is happening, and not merely to what ought to be happening.

Another reason is the regional unity being shaped today. We saw that symbolically portrayed at the Inauguration where a black chorus from the Atlanta University Center sang a Union marching song, "Battle Hymn of the Republic" at the inauguration of a southerner, a former governor of Georgia.

That was a heavy dose of symbolism, as was the dawn prayer at the Lincoln Memorial by Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr., the very site where his son led the great March on Washington in 1963. Then, it was a protest march at a time when southern drinking fountains were still marked "white" and "colored." Last month though, "Daddy" King's sermon was part of the official inauguration ceremonies. That's quite a change!

Finally, black people received a strong boost to our search for our past in the popularity of Alex Haley's book, "Roots," and the television series based on it. A decade ago we were fighting to get a handful of black actors into television commercials, and now a nationwide series reached millions of people with the story of the black experience in America.

"Roots" and the search for the black past will be with us this month in school programs, community displays and talks, and other events. That's as it should be, because what we are is shaped by our past, just as our future is shaped by our present.

That present has to be part of Black History Month, too. It's too easy to pay respect to some black figures from the past to ignore the present situation of black people. How people live and work and hope is history too, perhaps more important history than the doings of statesmen and the dates of wars.

Daily life and the way people cope with survival issues is basic to understanding who we are and what we are. Perhaps that's why Alex Haley's "Roots" has such a powerful hold on our imaginations, because we understand, through his words, how our ancestors coped with daily life and how they shaped their lives in a brutal, oppressive system.

We have to make sure our own great-grandchildren know of our own, personal 'Roots' too. They ought to know us, our dreams, our aspirations, our struggle to survive in the midst of poverty, unemployment, crime and despair.

They shouldn't have to search for it. Now is the time for black families to gather their own stories, the tales they've heard from their elders and the daily facts of their own lives and preserve them. They're important - for us and for those who come after us.

So Black History Month is not just a celebration of the past, it should be an examination of the present and a dedication of the future.

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as i see it

There Is Hope With President Jimmy Carter!

By Gerald O. Johnson
President Carter is so down home it is frightening. He is just a plain man that I feel the plain people can relate to.

Since the majority of the people in America are plain, we all can relate to him. Jimmy Carter has the makings to be a great President.

You know folks, I haven't been this optimistic about the future of this country in a long time. I am really impressed with our new President, Jimmy Carter and our new governor, Jim Hunt. These Jimmys look like they want to get this country back on the right track to sanity.

just down home folk who is determined to do a good job. I think he will succeed.

Ole Jimmy Hunt is putting his foot down, also. He has only been in office a little more than a month and already he has started the ball rolling on good legislation. I am quite impressed with the governor's reading skill tests for high school grads. Once we find some teachers that can read so the test can be administered we will be all set.

Meanwhile, this term may break the old adage: "What politicians say and what they do are two different things." The Good Points Of An Energy Crisis!

The more abundant a commodity is the more we take the commodity for granted. Take water for instance. Water is an essential for life yet we hardly ever consider its importance because it is never any further away than an

The same situation holds true with energy. This country is about one-twentyfifth of the

world in size but we use one-third of the world's energy. This is ridiculous. Businesses waste energy like it is an everlasting supply. Homes over use energy. Though I don't feel that crisis is one of supply today, I do know that natural resources are limited in supply. We can't go on forever wasting energy.

Therefore, the good thing about this crisis is it is teaching us to get along with what is needed rather than what is wanted. The crisis is teaching us to be more thrifty with limited supplies.

Unfortunately, pricing schemes used by utility companies are not in favor of conserving energy. This, in my opinion is a necessity for long range energy conserva-

tion. No voluntary program will be adequate enough to save energy.

Energy And The Schools
The cold weather has caused a problem with schools staying open. With the thermostats turned down the schools were getting cold. The gas problem has caused several schools to close for a few days.

To avoid such occurrences from happening in the future and to conserve energy, why not close schools in the winter instead of the summer.

This would alleviate several major problems now occurring in the system. Weather conditions that cause buses to be unsafe would be at a minimum. No more icy roads to be concerned with.

No more make up days because of schools closing due to weather conditions. If the school schedule ran

from March to December we could avoid many problems caused by the weather, especially the energy problem.

As dumb as kids are these days leaving high school I am personally in favor of a twelve month school year. But the energy situation may curtail my thinking in this direction.

But if schools are to be closed for three months, make those three months in the winter.

Eskimo Method
One final thought on energy. Eskimos have solved the problem of keeping warm by cuddling in the nude under a blanket. Obviously, they can't use conventional methods because heat would melt the igloo. But I think the Eskimos have got something there. Unfortunately when I suggested this at work the females complaining about being cold were suddenly O.K. I guess the Eskimos've got something there. It really works.