

# Editorials & Comments

by HOYLE H. MARTIN, SR.  
Post Editorial Writer

The ABC-TV dramatization of Alex Haley's "Roots" two years ago was viewed by an estimated 130 million people - the largest audience in the history of television viewing. The true story of an American family, "Roots" portrayed how the early ancestors of Haley struggled to survive the white man's attacks on the spirits of black men and the bodies of black women.

"The term 'Roots,'" Afro American writer Robert L. Harris Jr. said, "because nestled in the country's language from corner bars to corporate suites. It helped bridge the generation gap, with youngsters seeking out and quizzing older relatives about their family's past. (Furthermore), ... the phenomenon of 'Roots' endured in the nation's consciousness."

It appears appropriate that this week, during Negro or Afro-American History Month, the sequel to "Roots," "Roots: The Next Generations," is depicting the Haley's ancestral story after the Civil War and emancipation. The telecast represents an opportunity to present another chapter in the neglected aspects of our nation's history and offers some conscious raising concerns as did the original "Roots."

Beyond the personal but unselfish glories received by Alex Haley, and some initial emotional conscious raising, the value and impact of "Roots," within the very industry that has made the dramatizations available to so many Americans, has not seen fit to change its biasness. We are referring to what has been the plight of the black actors and actresses who so vividly portrayed the roles of the Haley's historic family.

After commenting on the "Roots" phenomenon, Gary Deeb of the Chicago Tribune wrote, "this seems

an appropriate time to point out one of the continuing atrocities of American television: Good black dramatic actors are begging for respectable jobs on network TV."

Deeb adds, "Except for the old 'I Spy' and the 'Roots' phenomenon of 1977, the only black-oriented TV programs to become hits have been comedies or variety shows ... It may be 1979, but TV still adheres to a racial attitude more attuned to the mid-1800s, with 'happy darkies' populating the video landscape on such programs as 'What's Happening,' 'Good Times' and 'The Jeffersons.'"

The point is that television, the media that so vividly portrayed the cultural heritage of blacks and their struggle for freedom in the presentation of "Roots," is a media caught up in the slave mentality. Blacks in TV comedies as such are fine, however, when there is no balance depicting blacks in other roles it tends to stereotype them to look like smart aleck children or adult clowns.

There certainly is a need for black people to be able to laugh at themselves. However, when laughter in TV is not coupled with a humanistic viewpoint, the media become detrimental to the depiction of black people.

Thus, it appears ironic that the television industry can so vividly portray some of the evils and misdeeds of our society but it can't or won't practice some of the good qualities that are or should be a part of our society.

Finally, blacks can and should use their own resources to begin the ending of this denial of acting opportunity. This can be done by pooling their financial resources as producers of and investors in TV programming. When we do these things, and we can, blacks will be able to command decent acting jobs to enhance their careers and their own sense of pride.

## Government - Get Your House In Order

Sears, Roebuck and Co. has launched one of the biggest attacks on federal employment policies and procedures in the nation's history through a law suit against 10 federal agencies.

Basically, Sears is asking a federal court to order the U.S. government to get its regulatory house in order before enforcing certain hiring practices among the nation's retail stores.

Specifically, the suit charges that federal laws, ranging from extension of the mandatory retirement age, to GI veterans' preference, to failure to enforce school desegregation, to eliminating discrimination within its own ranks are in conflict with other laws and are creating barriers for employers willing to comply with government standards for equal opportunity.

One of Sears' main charges is that the government has created an "unbalanced work force" dominated by white males, created by a failure to properly coordinate

civil rights enforcement efforts.

Sears contends, for example, that by being required to move their retirement age from 63 to 70 years, they are slowing down opportunities in the firm for promotions, particularly for minorities and women. Thus, the governments push to get more and better jobs for minorities and women is in conflict with their push to extend the retirement age to 70 years.

These conflicting policies must be resolved if the private sector is to be expected to cooperate with the intent of such laws. What makes the issue even more important is the fact that continued conflict over such laws and policies could endanger the existence of the whole pattern of civil rights laws and progress.

The Post urges the federal government to heed the advice of Sears and get their house in order in the best interest of all Americans, but particularly for those whom such laws and regulations are supposed to benefit.



The New Awareness....

## "The Day I Died"

Editor's Note—Maggie Lamb Nicholson has helped people learn to read for 64 years. At 72 she teaches reading to adults at CPCC and is a reading tutor in Charlotte public schools.

Born in Elizabeth City, the 12th of 13 children, Maggie lived on a farm settlement. Early experiences attending schools a far distance from home led her to oppose busing.

"A child should be at a school nearest home, being sick and lonely, bad roads have their effect. I've seen them hungry and too proud to let anyone know. We need our little children at schools nearest home, so that the parents can attend school affairs and be involved with teachers and principals."

Ms. Nicholson articles will in the spot appear weekly. You'll want to watch out for it.

by Maggie Nicholson  
Special To The Post

One's religious training has a great effect on one's dying. If one is taught there's a place of punishment for those who disobey the teaching of the Holy Bible, and there's a Heaven with mansions, pearly gates, the streets all paved with gold and flowing with milk and honey, then one can die in peace knowing well they will be welcomed into Heaven with joy and gladness forever.

This happened to me when I was a little girl more than sixty years ago. I became very ill, so much so I died. It was fortunate for me that we lived in the country about twelve miles from town. Otherwise I would not have been here to tell the story today. You see there were no undertakers in the country. So



Dr. Nicholson

people had to be sure you were dead before they called the undertaker. They would feel your forehead, listen for heart beat, put a mirror to your nose and mouth, put their ear to your chest and anything else to discover life. All these things were done for me before they will allow themselves to believe that I had gone to the great beyond.

I had been taught that Heaven was a beautiful place—that the streets were more beautiful than any thing on this earth of which we live. That God himself sat on a Throne and to enter this celestial city one had to cross Jordan river all mingled with glass, that it was chilly and cold and it would chill your body but not your soul. All this made one feel that to leave this old world would be a pleasure. We meet St. Peter at the gate and he would command the Heavenly Angels to show you around this beautiful place, they would take you where you wanted to go, so the first one that I wanted to see was my oldest sister who passed when I was only six

years old, so instead of getting my wings I wanted to see her. But to see Her I had to pass the throne of the Almighty GOD. While gazing on such beauty it occurred that I left my family in tears, it was then that I felt going back home meant more than golden slippers and the beauty of heaven. It was then that the throne of GOD, the celestial city, angels and heaven in all of its beauty meant very little to me any more. So I returned with out the privilege of seeing the mystery of heaven.

For a moment I was puzzled as to whether I'd continue or go back home, there I stood frozen for a while, the love for home was stronger than the love for heaven. So I about face and came back. On returning I sat on the window sill peeked through the window and saw my mother still feeling my forehead, it seemed that she saw some sign of life, but the tears were still streaming down her cheeks, I could not stand that any longer so I began to ease back in the old partly cold body and finally I opened my eyes and smiled, that was a great day in the household of the Lamb's.

Since that day both parents, grand-mother, my five brothers, and two sisters who lived at that time have all gone and left me alone. The dead lives and those who lived are dead. GOD has blessed me with one daughter and two grand children. I have often thought of heaven since that day so when my time really comes I feel that I won't dread the sting of death, because of its beauty and the loved ones who has gone on and that they are happy there.

## U. S. Senate Needs Fair Rules

by BAYARD RUSTIN  
During the 1960's, many young militants complained that American democracy was nothing more than a sham, a mere facade to conceal the real workings of an oppressive system. In Black Power, for example, Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton pointed to "the conflict between the so-called American Creed and American Practice." As they saw things, democracy's claims to equality and liberty "are simply words."

While some black people despaired of the democratic political process, others—like Dr. King, A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins and many more—grappled with its imperfections and transformed it into a dynamic agent for racial equality and constructive social change.

This transformation, of course, did not miraculously happen overnight. On the contrary, it was the culmination of a long series of painfully slow advances, some of them almost imperceptible and seemingly insignificant. We fought hard and long sometimes against terrible odds; but, by and large, we



DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING

succeeded in achieving many of our most important goals. Without a doubt, then, the old Carmichael-Hamilton critique of American democracy was proved erroneous. Yet as we toppled one obstacle after another, by organizing a Congressional majority, we never succeeded in eliminating one particularly frustrating roadblock—the Senate filibuster. Indeed, by establishing de facto minority rule, the filibuster serves as a perfect example of "a conflict between the so-called American Creed and American practice," to use

the words of Carmichael and Hamilton.

People with good memories will surely recall the 83-day talkathon aimed at defeating the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Although the bill had President Johnson's support, and the backing of a clear majority in the Senate, a minority held it captive by corraling it with a filibuster. Eventually the filibuster ended and the bill became law, but many other key pieces of civil rights legislation were either defeated or delayed by minority veto in the Senate.

Passage of the Anti-Poll Tax bill, for instance, was delayed for 22 years because of filibusters and threats of filibusters. And the Fair Employment Practices Act was held hostage for 18 years. Now, after fighting the undemocratic filibuster for so many years, we seem to be on the verge of a major breakthrough. Because of the untiring work of Senate Minority Leader Robert Byrd, a man who himself once used the filibuster in a truly masterful way, the Senate will soon consider a set of new rules designed to curb the veto

power of the minority. Under Senator Byrd's plan, an obstinate minority will no longer be able to defeat legislation by entangling the Senate in a web of frivolous amendments, as Senator Orin Hatch and others threatened to do on the Humphrey-Hawkins and the Labor Law Reform bills.

In almost every instance, filibusters have been used to kill legislation supported by blacks and working people.

## Blacks Named To Staff Committee

Dr. Jay Robinson, Superintendent of Schools, has appointed a staff committee to review proposals from various community and youth organizations for programs to help students pass state required competency tests. Several proposals from the community have already been submitted to the Superintendent. The staff committee will review these proposals in terms of the needs of students and will determine which proposals can best meet those needs. The committee will then make its recommendations on which proposals should be endorsed

By Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.

# TO BE EQUAL

## Affirmative Action Challenged

Sears, Roebuck & Co., the nation's largest retailer, has filed suit against ten government agencies. It charges that past and present federal actions have so shaped the nation's work force that the company should be relieved of liability for compliance with various—and often conflicting—affirmative action mandates.

Sears reaches back to World War II to demonstrate that the government maintained race and gender quotas on members of the armed forces. After the war legislation enabled veterans to get education and skills training opportunities not available to non-veterans. And it pressed employers to give veterans preference in jobs, an act that favored white males, to the exclusion of women and minorities.

Most recently, Congressional action barred discrimination against the aged, impeding early retirement and mandatory retirement rules in private industry. Thus, corporate efforts to recruit and to promote minority employees run up against the brick wall of older white males holding on to their jobs, including managerial positions to which they had been aided through past veterans preference rules.

What it all adds up to says Sears, is that the company cannot by itself reconcile various conflicting affirmative action mandates—for minorities, for women, for the elderly, for the handicapped, and for other groups deemed in need of special efforts.

Not only that, says Sears, but the government's own hiring record is bad. And until the government acts to shape the nation's workforce in accordance with its priorities, industry should be relieved of penalties for noncompliance with affirmative action mandates.

Sears does have some justice in its complaint. The concept of affirmative action for minorities previously denied their rights and opportunities has been seriously diluted through extension of that mandate to include all women, and others. Veterans preferences and higher retirement ages block progress for younger people and for minorities.

But that's hardly the whole story. There is nothing in the Sears brief to indicate that the private sector voluntarily, indeed enthusiastically, engaged in blatant racial discrimination. Sears has compiled one of the country's better minority hiring records, but can it seriously suggest that black applicants were treated "equally" with white applicants before company policy changed in the 1960's?

Sears' suit is on behalf of all retail establishments with 15 employees or more, but hiring discrimination was endemic in the retail business. Blacks were deemed not fit to serve white customers even in stores outside the South.

Sears' suit is on behalf of all retail establishments with 15 employees or more, but hiring discrimination was endemic in the retail business. Blacks were deemed not fit to serve white customers even in stores outside the South. And federal veterans preferences had nothing to do with that situation.

The fact is that federal discrimination against minorities was not imposed on the private sector. If anything, it reflected majority and private sector attitudes.

I can appreciate the bind Sears finds itself in. Government orders have been inconsistent and contradictory. Given the employment picture you can't have affirmative action for everybody. That's why it is necessary to have effective affirmative action for those most in need of special efforts—black workers struggling to overcome the negative heritage of persistent exclusion from jobs, trades and professions.

And that's why both the government and the private sector have to redirect their efforts. If the Sears suit results in such a clarification it will have served a good purpose.

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