

Editorials

Opportunities: Not Guarantees!

Much has been said and written about the American dream, or more appropriately, the question: "What is the American promise?" That promise is not guarantees, but rather are opportunities. It was in this context that we have noted in each of the past three weeks the need for black Americans to stop pressuring and relying on white-owned corporate contributions and government programs to guarantee support for black high education, civil rights organizations, new business ventures and job commitments.

We have stressed in these weeks too that the underlying reason for the guarantees or hand-out mentality has been in larger measure a result of the high percentage of broken black families, that is, one parent families usually headed by a female. Since it is the family that provides the individual with his/her basic behavior patterns, attitudes, life-long values, code of ethics, and general philosophy of life, a fractured family will leave an emerging adult with considerably less than the full measure of these inner tools for coping with life's problems and challenges.

It is the strength, or lack of it, of the black family that we find the root causes of low educational values and attainment; little or no commitment to the work ethic and American capitalism, both of which require commitments to opportunities, not guarantees; limited interest in the American political system, unless a black face is on the ballot for the presumed expectation of guarantees of some kind; disrespect for persons and property as seen in the high

rate of crime against others, especially other blacks, and the thief and-or destruction of their property; and the too often failure to support black-owned businesses when they are available and competitive.

We find too that the fractured or one-parent family is often the result of fathers abandoning the wife and children because of limited job opportunities quite often related realistically to racism in the job market combined with black women's assumptions that such jobless black men are due little respect. This is the result of a complicated web of husband and wife who themselves lack the inner tools to seek opportunities and not guarantees by succumbing to racism instead of embracing it as a challenge to overcome in the quest for greater opportunities. The fact is, if one black man can overcome the obstacles of racism and job discrimination, and many of them do, many more could with an "I can do" attitude and a belief in viewing problems as new challenges and new opportunities.

For example, better educational preparation and family stability are strong forces in reducing the obstacle of racism to more and better job opportunities. Without making educational opportunities for oneself no law or ordinance can assure you even the opportunity to seek a job much less guarantee a job.

Thus, it will be only when black Americans begin to seek in greater numbers opportunities instead of guarantees, that real equality will become a meaningful reality.

Among these forces will be the role reversals of black men and women. By the year 2000, Dr. Staples states black women will be substantially ahead of black men in educational and occupational attainment. Therefore, black women will not have to marry a man in order to attain a decent standard of living. This means marriage partners may be selected as much for sex appeal as for their socioeconomic status. While we agree with Dr. Staples' assessment based on current trends, we would add that it sounds like new and continuing problems for gaining stability with the black family structure.

Not too surprisingly, the EBONY article focuses largely on the question of racism in the year 2000. Our response to that is as we have commented in the above editorial, don't look for guarantees and make problems, look for new challenges and opportunities.

What's On Your Mind?

Letters to the editor must include your signature and address, both of which may or may not be used per your request.

Please limit letters to 500 words. Letters should be addressed to: Editor, The Charlotte Post, P. O. Box 39144, Charlotte, N.C. 28230.

Miller Says:

Peer Acceptance: Overcoming Difficult Challenges

By Sherman N. Miller
Special To The Post

I sensed a paradigmatic shift underway in the manner in which North Carolina's white civic leaders view black Americans' leadership capability while attending The Charlotte Post's "Churchworker of the Year" banquet in late July.

D. G. Martin, a white North Carolina civic leader, seized upon this opportunity to reveal some previously held ill-natured white American perceptions and offer hope for black American socioeconomic parity. He contended that whites previously viewed blacks in two unworthy manners. Martin says blacks were expected to only handle black issues or they were tokens.

As I listened to Martin's forthright revelations, I anxiously awaited his comments on the current thinking in white America. Martin claimed that mainstream America recognizes that the black American experience is an American asset. He said, "There may be something special in blacks' experience that uniquely qualifies blacks to lead in the mainstream."

I asked Martin to explain his assertion. He gushed



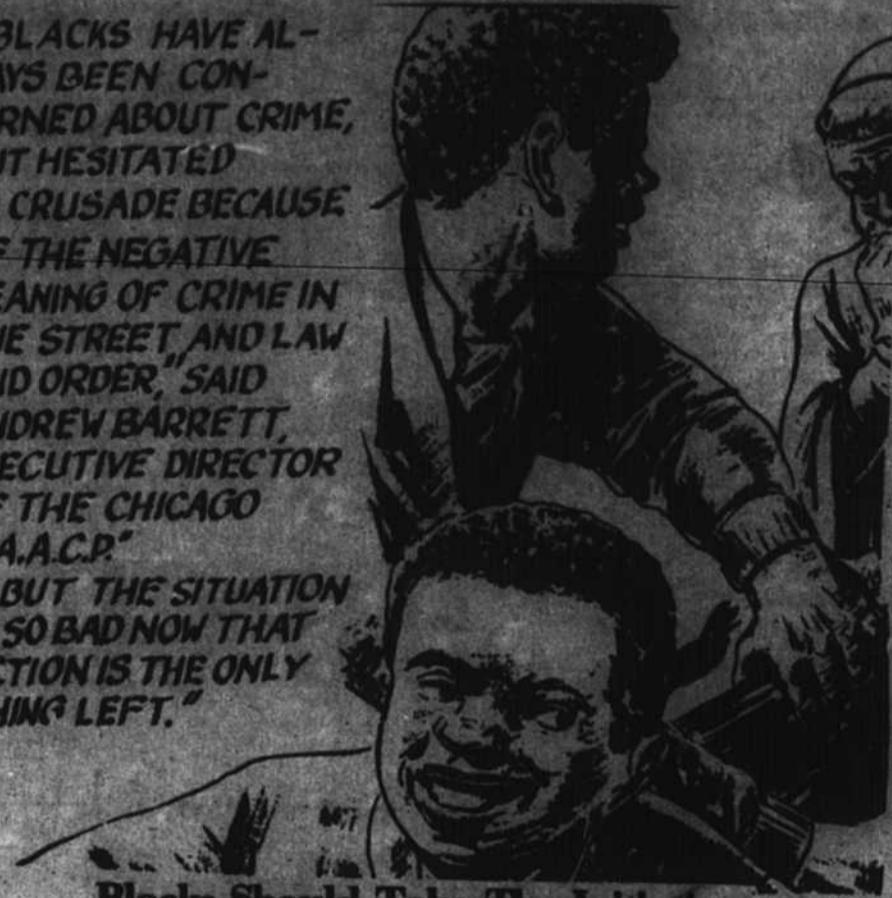
Sherman

forth with expressions like, "commitment to openness" and "fairness" when he attempted to describe black leaders. However, Martin summed up his feelings by sermonizing, "Not because he is black. Because he has special sensitivity for others."

Although Martin highlighted many positive aspects of black leadership in our conversation, I was not convinced that I had captured the real essence of his message. In recounting our discussion and Martin's speech, I have come to realize that Martin had proclaimed that white America has recognized that blacks possess unique skills for managing in crisis situations. Martin emphasized this special trait when he called attention to the fact that black leaders

"BLACKS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN CONCERNED ABOUT CRIME, BUT HESITATED TO CRUSADE BECAUSE OF THE NEGATIVE MEANING OF CRIME IN THE STREET AND LAW AND ORDER," SAID ANDREW BARRETT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE CHICAGO N.A.A.C.P.

"BUT THE SITUATION IS SO BAD NOW THAT ACTION IS THE ONLY THING LEFT."



Blacks Should Take The Initiative In The Fight Against Crime

The Flip Side Of Social Security

In 1935 President Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act - an Act that dramatically changed the quality of life for America's senior citizens. The Act grew out of the need for this country to pull out of the pit of economic depression and release its senior citizens from the wolves of poverty and starvation. Sixty-five percent of America's senior citizens lived in abject poverty then.

Today, about 14 percent of all senior citizens live in poverty; a number still too high. However, without Social Security millions of America's elderly would be beggars rattling cups on "beautifully landscaped" streets.

Since its birth, Social Security has been controversial. Opponents of the plan called it a copy from the Communist Manifesto. Regardless of the controversy, Social Security is important and vital to the pride, well-being and dignity of almost 37 million who receive about \$450 each month - annual cost of more than \$15 billion. There are critics who believe the entire program should be thrown out the window: forgetting that one



Sabrina

day they may need Social Security for simple survival.

Of course, the program was birthed from the world of politics and it is getting expensive. However, it is not a dole for the government. Social Security is funded by matching contributions from the 122 million workers and their employers and also covers approximately 95 percent of all jobs.

Elderly people with large incomes do not need Social Security. Workers who earn less, pay a larger percentage of their incomes than large wage earners. And if the money is privately invested, the money can earn more money. In addition to

the phenomenon, more elderly live longer and the birth-rate of younger generations is leveling off. Thus, fewer people will be supporting more people in the future. For example, in 1950, 16 workers paid into the fund for each Social Security beneficiary. Studies show that by the year 2030 a mere two workers will support each beneficiary.

Adjustments are and will be needed.

The flip side of Social Security presents a less than perfect picture. As it is well known, Social Security begun as a retirement supplement paid from taxes invested by workers. In 1938 Social Security benefits paid were expanded to supplement those who had not earned the benefits. By the time 1956 rolled around, Congress enacted Social Security Disability - which has no relationship to retirement and has become abused.

In 1970 workers contributed a maximum of \$374.40 - \$748.80 total including the employers' contribution. Today, workers pay up to \$5,383.60 annually inclusive with employers' contributions and is still on the incline.

The viewers of this portion of the Social Security benefits program advocate a system in which workers would fund their own "social security" through mandatory individual retirement account systems. Fine, but what about those citizens who need and rely on Social Security Disability Programs - does the government turn them into the streets?

Senior and disabled citizens do not want to become financial burdens on their families. These people need to retain this and other forms of independence to retain their self-worth and pride.

Yes, there will always be some abusers of any public and private system programs - but the few must not be allowed to destroy the peace of mind for the many.

Just as there are people abusing the Social Security programs, there are people over the age of 65 contributing greatly to the economy as workers.

Before the government starts hacking away at senior and disabled benefits, maybe it should stop and take a look at the public welfare system. That's where the fat should be trimmed. The welfare system makes it too easy to turn from being an asset to this country to being a liability.

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