

Black Women's Movement Is Alive And Growing

When the media talks about the "women's movement," what they mean is the predominantly middle class white women's movement, especially as represented by organizations such as the National Organization for Women. But there is a whole other women's movement that is diverse, very alive and growing, and in touch with those it represents -- that is the Black women's movement.

Black women have been left out, ignored, excluded, from the political system. The two-party system that controls public policy in this country serves the interests of white, corporate, male America. When we have tried to work in the system, we have been used either as tokens, denied any power -- or have been shoved behind the scenes, where we can do all the work without getting any recognition whatsoever.

Organizations for the empowerment of Black women are, because of the experience of Black

women in this country, based on a fundamental commitment to inclusion, of fairness -- because we have never received it in this racist and sexist society. Let me give you an example.

The National Political Congress of Black Women, founded in 1984 by Shirley Chisholm, was a response to the series of insults meted out to the Black community in general and Black women particularly by the Democratic Party throughout the course of the 1984 campaign of Rev. Jesse Jackson for President. The Democrats were determined to make clear that, although Jackson had registered tens of thousands of new voters into the Democratic Party, and although Blacks -- especially Black women -- have consistently been the party's most loyal constituency, we would get nothing -- not the changes in the discriminatory party rules that Jackson had fought for, nor any other acknowledgement or concession.

What small gesture the Democratic Party did make was to the establishment -- (read white) -- women's movement. NOW had made no contribution to the Democratic Party in 1984 -- except one. It refused to endorse the only pro-woman candidate in the race, Jesse Jackson, who happened to be Black. For that, Presidential candidate Walter Mondale rewarded it with the nomination of New York City Congresswoman Geraldine Ferraro for Vice President. True to its lily-white traditions, NOW never even suggested that the nomination should go to a Black woman. So Shirley Chisholm decided that Black women needed our own political organization, and the NPCBW was born.

In talking to Black women around the country I see a hunger for outspoken, militant, progressive Black leaders who will stand up to the political establishment in ways that are not exclusionary, that don't keep other people out, but that don't



compromise who we are. I want to mention a few of these leaders here.

They include Shirley Chisholm who in 1968 became the first Black Congresswoman and in 1972 became the first Black woman to seek the presidential nomination of the Democratic Party; Barbara Lett Simmons, another founding member of the NPCBW, a leader in education and a militant advocate for

statehood for the District of Columbia; Dorothy Height, president of the National Council of Negro Women; Dr. Gloria Toote and Ona Weldon, respectively, the presidents of the New York City and Philadelphia chapters of the NPCBW; Marian Butcher, former executive director of the Alaska American Civil Liberties Union, now in the midst of a fight with the civil rights organization she helped to build; Ozell Dean, founder of Top Ladies of Distinction, the national organization concerned with senior citizens, youth, the status of women and the environment; and Edith Askins, long-time South Carolina political activist.

These Black women, and many, many more -- middle class and working class, young and old, Republican, Democrat and independent -- have opened their organizations up to me to speak on the issues that I have become a spokesperson for, the

issues of concern to Black people, to poor people and to the disempowered. I speak to them about building a new independent movement in this country based on the majoritarian values of peace, decent jobs and health care, an end to racism and sexism and homophobia. And they say, "Teach, sister, teach."

These are women who have taken risks. They know what it is like to have people walk all over you and around you and through you. And they know how to fight, not only for themselves, but for all our people.

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Letters To The Post

Black Parents Need Child Care Aid

Dear Editor: Black people have been at the forefront in the struggle for civil rights and economic opportunity in this country. As part of our ongoing struggle for equality, we need to turn our attention to a very pressing problem being faced by many of us nationwide. It is a problem that has the potential to significantly retard the gains we have struggled so hard and so long to make. This problem is the growing need for child care assistance.

According to the Children's Defense Fund, for Black families with children, wives' contributions to family income increased from 19.4 percent in 1967 to 30 percent in 1985, while the average income of two-parent families with children dropped 3.1 percent between 1973 and 1984. The decrease would have been more than three times greater had mothers not increased their participation in the work force. The roots of this phenomenon lie in recent economic recessions and the inflation of the 1970's. But the direct result has been removal of the previously reliable network of relatives and neighbors that parents depended on to care for

pre-school and early school age children. Likewise, continued federal cutbacks have viscerated much of the child care that had been available for low income families. It is becoming increasingly evident that many Blacks and other minorities must work in order to either rise out of poverty, or to keep from slipping into it.

The Council on Economic Priorities found that across the country, businesses and local governments are merging funds and resources to address this societal crisis. Though only 3,000 out of six million U.S. employers have undertaken child care initiatives, many of these pioneering efforts now provide models for successful programs and help illustrate the range of approaches that are available. They include: on- and off-site day care, resource and referral services to help parents find quality care near their home, paid and unpaid parental leave for child birth and flexible benefit plans that allow parents to pay on a pre-tax basis for either child or dependent care. However, companies cannot and should not be expected to shoulder the full burden of addressing the child care dilemma.

Child welfare themes are likely to assume center stage in the upcoming presidential race. Of particular importance to Blacks and other minorities in the ensuing competition as to which party really speaks for 'family' is that the needs of the children and parents be served.

A comprehensive child care bill introduced before Congress November 19 (House: HR3660, Senate: S1885) would make child care more affordable for low and moderate income families, and increase the accessibility of quality child care for all families. We should use letters, phone calls and all means at our disposal to make sure the Act for Better Child Care receives both the candidates' and the country's critical attention.

Alexa D. Watts, Research Assistant Council on Economic Priorities

NOTE: Readers desiring a free newsletter on corporate child care initiatives should send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Child Care, CEP, 30 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003 or call our toll-free number, 1-800-U CAN HELP.

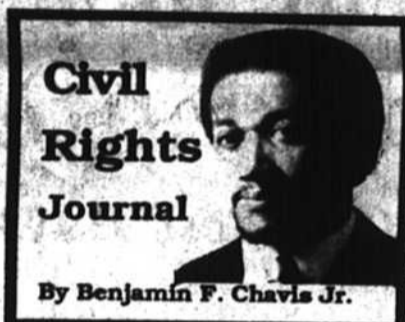
Voting For Change In Keyville, Ga.

The African American citizens of Keyville, Georgia, 26 miles west of Augusta, liken their situation to the old plantation system. Most whites in their town have running water. Blacks don't. Most whites have a sewage system; Blacks don't. And most Blacks are dependent on the whites who control the town for their livelihood.

Now the African American community of Keyville has organized to change all that. On January 4, 1988 the town will hold an election. It will also be the first local election in Keyville in 55 years. It will also be the first local election in which African Americans of this town have ever voted. The power relationship of the town could thus be changed forever.

It all started back in 1985 when the home of the Streetman family caught on fire. As members of the African American community frantically tried to put out the fire, they also called three county fire departments. The first department for their county was 20 miles away. The other two, though closer, refused, saying Keyville was not in their jurisdiction. The Streetman home burned to the ground while the Black community watched, helplessly.

That's when the African American residents formed the Concerned Citizens of Keyville, spearheaded by Mrs. Emma Gresham, a retired teacher. At community meetings the group talked about their situation: about the outhouses and the lack of indoor plumbing; about having to haul water from their



churches, from those few African American residents with wells, or from the creek because the African American community had no water supply. They talked about going 18 miles to the nearest clinic because there was no doctor in Keyville, and about sending their children almost 20 miles each way, every day, because the African American school was closed down after school desegregation.

They also talked about the white-owned nursing home which ran its sewage -- including the waste from its patients -- into an open ditch and through the African American community. They also talked about the economic and political stranglehold which the Marshall family, the owners of that nursing home, had on the town. And about the changes the African American community could affect if that nursing home weren't the only game in town and, thus, able to get away with paying barely minimum wages. Some even recalled how old Mr. Marshall, the white patriarch of the town, used to say he was the mayor of the town, even though

no election had been held since 1933.

Administration of the town had been turned over to the county during the Depression. Now African Americans, who are 80% of Keyville's population, want it back. With the help of Herman Lodge, the county commissioner and Rep. Tyrone Brooks, their state representative -- both African American -- they began to reactivate the town government.

Now Mrs. Gresham is running for mayor. She articulates her platform like a practiced politician: "a government for all the people... a water and sewage system that the poor and elderly can afford... new jobs, an A-1 city."

Mrs. Gresham, Mrs. Turetha Neely, who is Keyville's African American Superintendent of Elections, and others active in the struggle face heavy opposition, however. The Marshalls and other local whites haven't paid local taxes in 54 years and they don't want to start now. The Marshalls are even said to have threatened their African American employees with dismissal if they support the movement toward self-government. Then, too, many white residents wonder why the Black folks want to change things; after all, if they need anything, all they need to do is ask.

Gayle Korotkin of the Christic Institute, a public interest law firm which has provided invaluable legal assistance, said it best: "Rights without power is meaningless. This election would mean real political power for the Black community."

Take Buy Freedom Campaign To The Movies, Share In The Profits

Tony Brown Making \$2 Million Gamble On Anti-Drug Movie, "The Durham Morning Herald" headline announced.

Then, recently I announced that I was going to make the movie available to individuals and groups -- profit and non-profit, and anti-drug organizations as a fund raiser before it opens in theaters nationwide. That means that I have decided against the safe profit stream of getting my investment back by selling the movie to a Hollywood distributor.

But instead of breaking even in the theatrical market (putting the movie in the theaters first), I can break even in the ancillary markets (video cassettes, TV rights, foreign rights, etc.) where the number of gross dollars exceed the theatrical dollars. So, what I have essentially devised is a way to divert much of "The White Girl's" money into com-

munity hands. This allows me to not only break into the movie business, but to implement my Buy Freedom philosophy of turning our money over with one another more than once. Even when looked at purely from an economic position, it makes good sense.

My community buys over half of the tickets to movies each year. This year, we spent \$2.1-billion of the \$4.2-billion. When my people get inside the theaters, we are much heavier consumers of the popcorn, colas, hot dogs, etc. Would you believe that we eat and drink another \$2.1-billion? And on Monday night, the slowest night of the week for movie houses, my people are the only ones who faithfully show up.

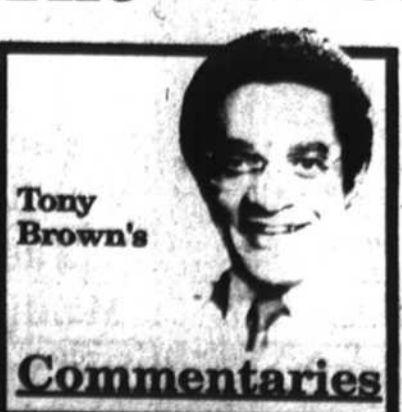
Obviously, we are experts at consuming movies. With just a little effort, we can also learn to profit from our consumption. As

a producer, I can't make it in the movie business without my people. But I can't make it with them in the shape they're in, either. So here's my deal.

I've got a \$2-million movie called "The White Girl," a love story about the dangers of drug addiction and racial anxiety. The plot is rooted in truth. It revolves around a Black college student (or "incognero," as the Black Student Union president in the movie calls her) who preferred white dolls when she was

little and prefers White people now that she's a big girl. Add a cocaine problem to that one and you've got Kim Barnes.

I hired about 100 people to make the movie; 80 percent of them were from my community, are not only people from my community, but people who are loyal to my community, all of whom are very talented, but usually very unemployed. Here's



where you come in. We want you to consume "The White Girl" the same way you consume the trivia that Hollywood serves up. But we also want you to share from the millions of dollars you will spend. In 100 cities, we will rent a theater and bring "The White Girl." You sponsor a night as a fundraiser premiere and sell the

tickets. Your group makes a financial guarantee and meets our criteria for being able to sell an agreed upon number of tickets at an agreed upon price schedule. There are no profit guarantees. What you earn depends on how hard (and how smart) you work.

It is not easy, but anything will work if you will! And you will have approximately five months to pull it off. You can write me for details at Tony Brown Productions, Inc., 1501 Broadway, Suite 2014, New York, NY 10036.

Self-respect is based on self-reliance. Members of other groups hire people from their community to work on their movies -- creating themselves as Superman, Jesus, Cleopatra, etc. Black people are presented as updated darkeys (the comics) and fat mummies, ingratiating themselves to a superior race. That's why two-thirds of Black children in a study this year pre-

ferred White dolls over Black dolls.

Our movie is a breakthrough because we provide economic opportunities for Blacks in the motion picture industry and improve our image while addressing the significant problems of drug abuse.

Dr. Ralph T. Grant, Jr., a Newark, N. J. city councilman, is interested in sponsoring a benefit premiere because his group shares that dual objective: "Fathers Against Drugs serves a twofold purpose. We are primarily committed to fighting against drugs. However, we are also fighting the stereotype America has given Black fathers."

We can turn our money over with each other from 5 to 12 times -- the way other ethnic groups do. We can present ourselves truthfully and honestly. And we can teach our precious babies that Black dolls are just as beautiful as White dolls.