

# Editorials

## The Charlotte Post

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## Equality And Justice For All

In this Black History Month, Americans all appear to be pausing and hopefully recognizing the contributions of black Americans while struggling to overcome the burdens of historic slavery, segregation, institutionalized racism and the lingering socio-psychological chains that tend to lock even today, too many black people into that kind of behavior and thinking pattern.

In a broader context as Americans, both black and white, at least most we like to think, look with a sense of pride at how our nation's largest minority group has, through all its adversity, "overcome" to begin truly sharing in the American dream. Yet, and without sounding like a paranoid black racist, as Black History Month 1988 itself passes on into the annals of human events and the real world reappears, we have to pause again and ask, how much progress is really taking place?

As most of us cheered with the defeat of the nomination of Robert Bork for the U. S. Supreme Court, few are aware that President Reagan has appointed a record-breaking 334 judges. These appointees represent 45 percent of all federal judgeships. The impact of these conservative thinking judges will have an impact in the nation's federal courts far beyond the lifetime of many adults, including those who fought in the civil rights struggles of the 1960's. The impact of these Reagan appointed judges is already being felt. For example, *The Wall Street Journal* reports that in an eight month period in 1987 federal appeals courts struck down city and state affirmative action programs in three major urban areas--San Francisco, Richmond and Michigan. Yes, you guessed it, all three rulings were written by Reagan appointees.

We ask this question about progress too when we witness in our city a call for ending busing in our public schools based on the assumption that it is having a negative impact on quality education. The fact or the real issue is not busing, but rather lingering segregated housing patterns. No one, it seems, wants to face up to the hard fact that we remain largely a segregated society in those areas that cut the deepest into our real values, by this we mean where we each call home and where we each worship our God on Saturday and Sunday.

Significantly, quality education in American public schools has declined because far too many parents have abandoned their responsibility to their children. From breakfast in the morning to health clinics and sex education and the teaching of basic moral values, these have unnecessarily been given to the school by parents too preoccupied with their personal interests and a strong desire to shift responsibility and subsequently blame when things don't go well.

We have to ask the question about progress also when we observe a passion by some to wave the Confederate flag, a symbol

of slavery and all of its negative aftermath. We have no problem with the individual's right to carry and wave the Confederate flag or mount it on its own property. However, we strongly object to the mounting of that flag on a public property supported by all taxpayers.

Likewise, we object to those states and local governments that oppose the recognition of the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., a symbol of what America is all about, freedom and justice for all. To repeat, King setting aside for the moment that he was black, represented all the values upon which our nation was founded. The Confederate flag represents all that America is not supposed to be.

Our question arises too, in relation to the rising issue of merging the city and county Parks and Recreation Departments for all the wrong reasons. It appears that in a passionate attempt to find money for roads, some of our elected officials want to throw good planning, judgment and common sense out the window to build roads that are the primary responsibility of state government. It seems ironic too, that when a large part of the western part of the city was being locked in by I-85 on the North, I-77 on the east with deep cuts into a residential neighborhood, Hwy. 16 on the west, constant efforts to widen LaSalle Street for commercial truck traffic from Graham Street to I-85 by ripping through yet another neighborhood, and low flying commercial air traffic people in southeast Charlotte were happy for these road problems to be elsewhere.

Now that the reality of not heeding then City Councilmember Harvey Gantt's call for balanced growth, southeast Charlotteans want quick fix solutions to the road problem and want these same westsiders to help pay for it. This, too, causes us to wonder about citizen's commitment to equality and justice.

Finally, the Urban League's State of Black America Report continues to remind us that black Americans still earn an average on 58 cents to every one dollar earned by a white person. This clearly illustrates that America is still a land of inequality and a cancer that we must all work hard to overcome.

Thus, as we celebrate Black History Month, we must be forever mindful and so advise others that equality and justice are still not a universal dream as well as a reality for all Americans.

Martin Luther King, Jr., helped to instill in all of us, both black and white, the real and true spirit of America like no one else has ever done. Now let us all set aside our prejudices, our selfishness and our personal egos to make America what she ought to be. Then and only then will Black History Month be what it has a right to be!

## Racial Justice And The Death Penalty

Guest Editorial

By Carol McBride, MD

Of all the hundreds of factors determining who will be sentenced to death for a crime and who will not, there is one that singles people out far more clearly than any other, and that factor is race. Discrimination against black defendants and against black victims has been a part of our system of justice for hundreds of years and is still tolerated today.

Just as Slave Codes called for the automatic execution of a slave who murdered a white man, but for the milder punishment of a white man who murdered a slave, laws passed in most Southern jurisdictions after the Civil War continued the pattern of discrimination. Blacks were punished more severely than whites who committed similar crimes, and those who committed crimes against whites were punished more severely than those who committed similar crimes against blacks. The worst punishments were reserved for black defendant/white victim situations, and it's not surprising that this racial combination in murder is the one most likely to lead to a death sentence today.

The Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments were partly intended to eliminate this injustice but, while such discriminatory practices are no longer written laws, unwritten laws in the form of attitudes and practices produce the same results.

Professor David Baldus's recent study of homicides in Georgia shows that a defendant with a white victim has a 4.3 times

greater likelihood of being sentenced to death than a defendant with a black victim. Almost identical statistics apply to North Carolina. Ninety percent of the people executed in the U.S. since 1977 had white victims, although half of all homicide victims are black. Fifty percent of the total number of people executed have been black although blacks make up only 12% of the population. This disparity is way out of proportion to the somewhat higher incidence of crime among blacks.

The Baldus study was used in the case of McCleskey v. Kemp, decided by the U.S. Supreme Court last year. Warren McCleskey, a black man on Georgia's death row, was found guilty of murdering a white policeman during an armed robbery. There were a total of 17 homicides of police officers in the same county between 1970 and 1980. None of the other 16 defendants was sentenced to death. Only one of the others even reached the state of a sentencing trial. That man received life imprisonment; his victim was a black policeman.

The Supreme Court decided against McCleskey's claim of discrimination based on statistical information, but it acknowledged the validity of the Baldus study. The Court stated that in this case statistical evidence of a pattern of discrimination was not sufficient but that individual intentional discrimination on the part of prosecutor, judge, or jury had to be shown, a task virtually impossible to carry out.

In response to the decision in this case, and taking note of the Court's suggestion that the problem might better be addressed by legislators, a bill intended to end racial discrimination in the application of the death penalty has been drawn up and will soon be considered by Congress. Its main points are: to forbid the imposition of death sentences based more likely than not upon the race of the defendant or upon the race of the victim, to allow states to override a finding of racial disparity in a particular case by convincing evidence, to require states to collect information on discrimination in death sentencing, and to require states to provide counsel for indigent defendants who wish to raise a claim of discrimination.

Implementing such a law may be tedious and time consuming. One of the stated reasons the Supreme Court gave for denying McCleskey was that to grant it would disrupt the criminal justice system. Certainly the system needs disrupting if its smooth functioning depends on maintaining and supporting racist patterns and attitudes.

Whatever its difficulties this bill is still an essential first step needed to move toward fairness in the application of the death penalty. It will come much too late for many, but as long as any state continues to use the death penalty, it is self-evident that it should at least administer it in a tolerable, just way without the taint of racism that now characterizes it.

## No Need For Black History Month

Once again it is February; and once again we are celebrating Black History Month.

Black History month, as we all know, is the time designated to recognize and commemorate the many contributions and achievements made by Black Americans.

In essence it is the remedy to the oversight of Blacks being conspicuously absent from the history books used by this nation's school systems.

It further serves as an appeasement to keep black accomplishments from being present in future history books.

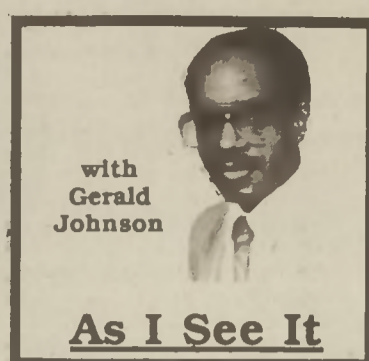
I find it ludicrous that a month has been relegated for such a commemoration. Black history is American history.

To separate the two goes a long way to undermine the significance of the achievements made by Black Americans.

Benjamin Banneker's urban layout for Washington, D. C. was not for the betterment of Black Americans.

Doctor Charles Drew's research on blood plasma did not make blood transfusion possible for just Black Americans.

Granville T. Woods' egg incubator system which al-



lowed telegraphing from moving trains was not an invention to aid Black Americans.

George Washington Carver's work in agricultural chemistry did not make America a better place to live for Black Americans.

Elijah McCoy's 72 patents related to lubricating appliances for engines wasn't invented to make traveling by train a benefit to Black Americans.

The first incandescent electric lamp invented by Lewis H. Latimer was not used to light the way for only Black Americans.

On the contrary; These achievements were great American achievements, not great Black achievements. Black Americans received little benefit, and even less reward for these accom-

plishments. Major corporations have been formed from many of the inventions made by Black people. Not only did the inventors reap little reward, but Blacks still face tough times getting good positions in these corporations.

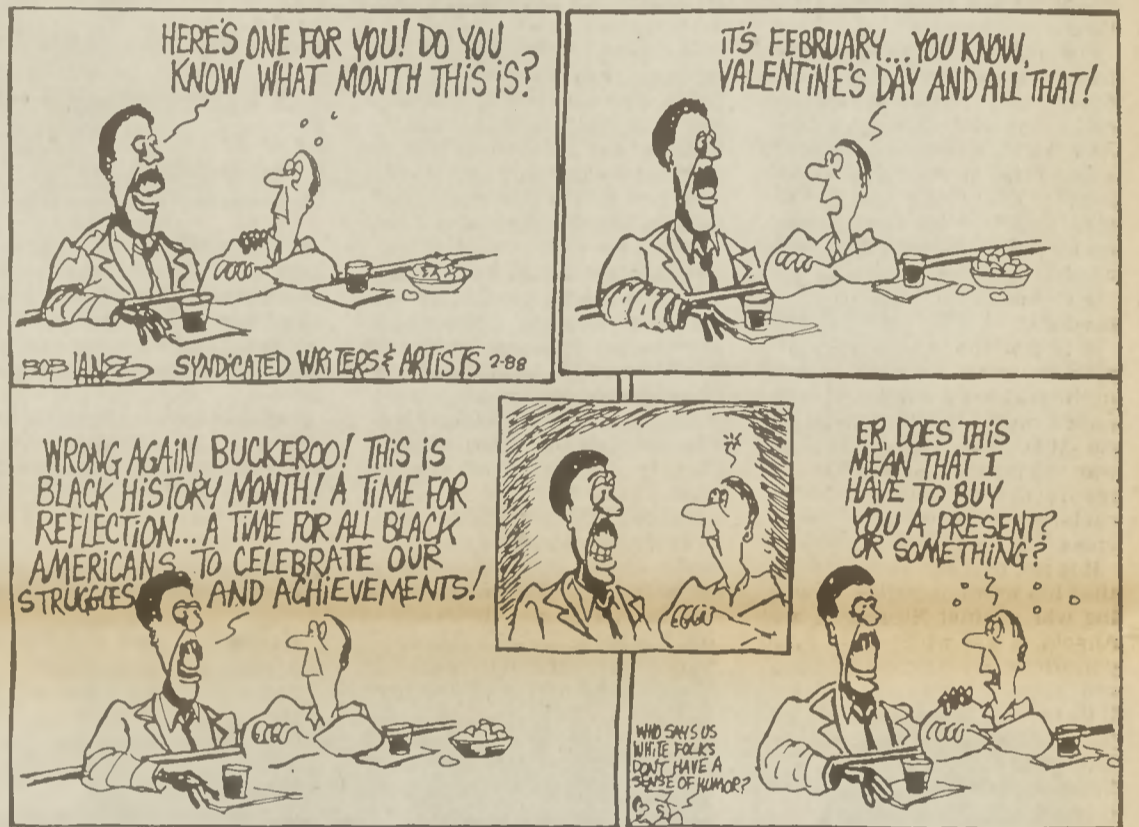
Isn't that ironic. Corporations refusing to give equal employment opportunities to Blacks, yet their corporation was founded on the resourcefulness and talents of Black people.

Doctor Drew died after an automobile accident because he was refused a blood transfusion. He was not given a blood transfusion because of the color of his skin.

Americans are the beneficiaries of Black achievements. Historians should document such contributions as a part of American History. School systems should teach it twelve months out of the year.

No one should be happy with Black History Month. It is better than what we had in the past, but it must be viewed as an interim step to what is the ultimate desire...the assimilation of Black history with American history.

The two are one in the same.



## Black Community Deterioration

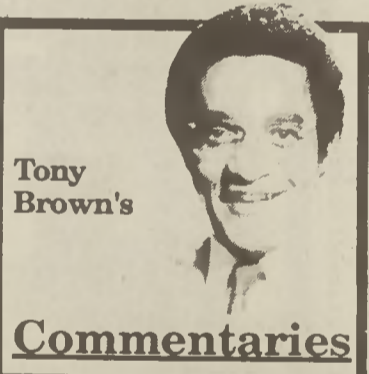
Long ago I arrived at the conclusion that the major socio-economic and political problems facing Black people were primarily due to a mental health problem. Afranzed Americans were not born with a mental disorder, but shortly into arriving were thoroughly socialized by White society into self-destructive behavioral patterns. I call it racial anxiety.

It crosses all class and economic lines. Self-inflicted wounds are everywhere. The leading Black conservative, a Harvard professor and appointed to the Reagan Cabinet, was arrested for drugs. A leading Black liberal politician now walks among the ruins of his professional reputation because of rumors of drugs.

Following a rousing performance in Houston recently, an all-male singing group invited a bevy of beautiful women to their harem of drugs in the hotel suite. An East Coast Black mayor stumbled around the Super Bowl in San Diego ignominiously, confirming in some minds the rumor that 'The White Girl' has him on a leash.

A Houston Black leader and preacher was arrested for cocaine possession. A New York "activist" preacher-without-a-pulpit has been accused of selling out his community by spying for the FBI after he was allegedly "turned" when caught in a drug entrapment scheme.

Black America made about



\$30 billion in 1970; about \$80 billion in 1973; \$230 billion in 1986; and will earn over \$900 billion in 2000. And the projection is that in 2000 when we make \$900 billion, about 70 percent of Black men will be unemployed; 70 percent of Black women will not have a man; and 70 percent of Black children will be raised without a father.

From these figures you can see that our community deteriorates as we earn at an exponential rate.

Many Black teens are reading at a level below their grandparents. Education and hard work are perceived as "Whitey's" thing. Manners and politeness are perceived as character flaws.

Older Blacks are afraid of the Black generation behind them. Blacks who succeed professionally and economically are praised for leaving less fortunate Blacks behind. They only mingle with other Blacks at MLK celebrations approved by Whites.

Busing Black children to White people failed both to educate them or make them acceptable to Whites, but we insist on more busing. Maybe that's why 70 percent of Black children prefer a White doll over a Black doll.

Black colleges that succeed in educating 7 out of 10 Blacks who attend (White colleges graduate 3 out of 10 Blacks) are called failures and examples of segregation.

Some Black women want blue eyes and wear store bought ones as a badge of honor. Blacks have carried out the most successful boycott ever conducted against Blacks in business. We spend 95 percent of our \$230 billion with a non-Black.

About 150 Black organizations spend \$3 billion for annual conventions at White hotels, discussing White racism and Black poverty.

To wash our hands clean, we blame White people and Ronald Reagan for the broken Black family, high unemployment, illiteracy, drug abuse, poor weather, bad breath...

TONY BROWN'S JOURNAL TV series can be seen on public television Sunday, on Channel 42 at 5 p.m. It can also be seen on Channel 58, Saturday, 1:30 p.m. Please consult listings.

## Letters To The Post

### If Elected, Can Bob Walton Regain Respect?

Dear Editor:

As a black youth, I believe Bob Walton is one of the most confused men I've ever seen. First of all, I do not hate Bob Walton. But I don't have any respect for him as a role model for black youths.

I am a black youth from Piedmont Courts and I know Walton is an embarrassment to the city and to blacks.

Bob Walton talks about forgiveness. One thing I have realized is God may have forgiven him but the people have not. What has he done for the community in the past? I believe he has not done one thing for the community but helped us lose. All he has done is hurt us.

I ask the people in District 2, the voters, do you think if Wal-

ton gets elected, he will regain the respect he lost? Do you think that we, as young blacks, should grow up to be like him?

Those who support Walton don't have to live in Piedmont Courts. You have role models in your community. We have very few.

ANTHONY FORD