

Anti-Choice Will Mean Death For Many Poor, Black Women

During the growing controversy surrounding the imminent action of the Supreme Court to reconsider and possibly overturn the *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion in 1973, the perspective of the country's black women have not been heard loud enough.

Unfortunately, if the nation's African-American women do not organize and speak up loudly for pro-choice and the retention of legalized and accessible abortion, they will be the real losers.

It's true that black women have had problems with the feminist movement. Commonly thought of as a "white woman's thing" feminism didn't quite have that much appeal for black women who believed they'd somehow betray black men if they participated in the women's movement. Given the choice to fight racism or sexism, black women usually opted to put their strength behind fighting racism.

However, the feminist movement continued with some black female support and a result of the women's movement that would come to greatly enhance the lives of all women, especially blacks, would be *Roe v. Wade*. In *Roe v. Wade* an anonymous pregnant woman challenged the criminalization of abortion and in winning the case transformed abortion from a secret danger to a legal right.

Roe v. Wade gave women more power over procreation. In essence more control over their lives.

What black woman did not need more control over her life? But now, 16 years later, there is a loud movement of people, brought on by mainly white, male fundamentalists, who wish to take this control away. They say they want to protect unborn children. They say fetuses have a right to life, no matter the circumstances of the women carrying these fetuses. The anti-choice people want to recriminalize abortion or at least allow individual states the right to regulate abortion services, giving state government sovereignty over women's bodies.

If these anti-choice people succeed in having *Roe v. Wade* restricted or overturned, there is no doubt that abortions will still continue in America. Abortions have been around as long as women have. However, going back to pre-*Roe* criminal laws will mean that only wealthy, well-connected, mostly white women will be able to afford the right to choice. Poor, mostly black women, will either have no choice at all or will be subject once again to back alley butchers and potentially fatal self-induced abortions.

"I had heard about the coat-hanger and knitting needle abortions that were the standard



From the Editor's Desk

Jalyne Strong

methods for poor and nonwhite women before the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ...," wrote Judy Simmons in *Essence* magazine (October 1987).

Statistics bear out the consequences of what the recriminalization of abortion will do to black women in general. According to reports by Sabrae Jenkins of the Women of Color Partnership Program, based in Washington, DC, women of color represented 75 percent of deaths from illegal abortions before abortions were made legal. Jenkins' report found "in New York alone 50 percent of illegal abortion deaths were black women."

Since slavery in America, white men have tried and in many instances succeeded in controlling black women's reproduction. It is not without some irony that the leader of the anti-choice group, Operation Rescue, is a white man, Terry

Randall. His most vocal supporters, Joe Scheidler, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson and let's not omit President George Bush, also, are all white men. Given historical knowledge, one must question these men's motives in their effort to curtail women's, particularly black women's, power over procreation.

"In the nineteenth century, abortion was first criminalized as part of an antifeminist and nativist effort to force upper-class women to reproduce at the same time immigrant, black, disabled and poor women were slated for sterilization," reports *Ms. Magazine* ("The Gathering Storm: *Roe v. Wade*," April 1989). "Undoing *Roe v. Wade* would legalize similar racist policies again."

Indeed, there was the time when black women were forced to be sterilized. Now, the pendulum have swung in the opposite direction, but the result is still to take away a black woman's control over her body.

It's common knowledge that unwanted pregnancies bring a host of problems, the most defining being the usual poverty trap that captures poor, mostly black, single mothers. The child born of the unwanted pregnancy will likely face poverty, malnutrition, poor health care, and in many instances abuse.

The right-to-lifers speak of

saving unborn fetuses, but they neglect to speak to maintaining healthy children. They harass abortion-seeking women, intimidate scared, pregnant teenagers and burn down abortion clinics. They do not champion federally subsidized child care. They are not alarmed at the growing number of American children living in poverty. They do not offer help to curtail child abuse. Conversely, they do seek to improve access to sex education or the availability of birth control.

It seems they are only concerned with a so-called right-to-life, not a right to a quality life. And for this reason their motives will always be in question.

Until last week's march in Washington that brought out 300,000 pro-choice activists, the people who support a woman's right to privacy and abortion have quietly taken this freedom of choice for granted. Now that *Roe v. Wade* is being threatened, people who have the most at stake have to speak up for their rights.

Black women have the most to lose if the Supreme Court justices allow any restrictions to a woman's right to a private, safe and legal abortion. If worse comes to worse, black women in general, will have to pay with their lives, either through death or poverty.

Abortion remains a complicat-

ed issue. There will always be the sorrowing concern for the unborn children. There's little doubt that few if any people like the idea of abortion and women, contrary to what the right-to-lifers would have you believe, do not enjoy having abortions.

Statistics gathered by Family Planning Perspectives (July/August 1988) show that the top three reasons women choose to have abortions are: one, can't afford a child, two, wanting to avoid single parenthood and three, (having the child) would change her life (job, school).

The ability to be able to choose a certain quality of life for herself, has to remain a right of life for women, all women, whether they are rich or poor, black or white.

For this reason, black women especially must begin to be more vocal in support for pro-choice. Write, call or telegram President Bush and Attorney General Thornburg demanding that they defend *Roe* rather than call for its reversal. Write or contact your federal and state representatives. Urge pro-choice legislators to take leadership roles, to speak out against overruling *Roe*, and to sponsor legislation protecting abortion should constitutional protection be withdrawn. Give money to your favorite pro-choice organizations.

Remember it is your life you're fighting for.

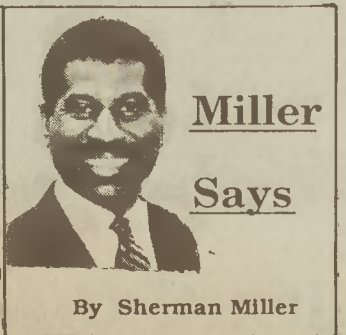
Sam Nunn Raised Your Taxes

"Read my lips! No new taxes!" will earn President George Bush a place in American folklore. But this brash statement undermined the Democratic Party's modus operandi. Thus aspiring Democratic presidential hopefuls can be expected to conjure up ways to make Bush eat his words.

U.S. Senator Sam Nunn's (D-GA) handling of the ill-fated nomination of former U.S. Senator John Tower for Secretary of Defense, showed that America's taxes can be raised regardless of President Bush's proclamation. The Tower debacle was a presidential power-play because it became the first time a Cabinet nominee had been voted down by the United States Senate. This vote was laced with partisan politics.

But we need to take a closer look at the message the Tower disaster sent to the world. Tower's nomination made President Bush appear embattled at the transition of power from former President Ronald Reagan. It signaled the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and some cash starved non-OPEC nations that America was prime for another staged oil shortage.

That is, the first OPEC oil embargo came during the height of former President Richard M. Nixon's Watergate crisis. The



Miller Says

By Sherman Miller

second oil embargo came when President Jimmy Carter was shown to be a weakling. The above suggest that a weak U.S. presidency guarantees action by OPEC to drive up world oil prices.

Some may protest this position. Yet they must notice that during the tenure of Ronald Reagan, a very strong U.S. President, the world oil market collapsed.

Thus, Sam Nunn and his Democratic cohorts have successfully raised America's tax burden without a vote on the Senate floor. One need only notice that oil prices have risen roughly 15 percent since Bush took office. Even the Russians, whose economy is in a crisis, thumbed their noses at the U.S. by joining OPEC in controlling their oil

output.

The present quasi-oil embargo, where OPEC and some non-OPEC nations are attempting to manipulate the world oil market, should be considered Sam Nunn's presidential tax burden for the American people. Since the U.S. economy is driven by the price of oil, Americans can look forward to more inflation and higher interest rates.

Will inflation push a new car out of the reach of many marginal families, thereby precipitating a collapse of the U.S. automobile market? Will the housing industry grind to a halt because the American Dream has become too expensive for young Americans? Will high unemployment become the ripple effect from collapsed automobile and housing industries?

Although Sam Nunn wants everyone to believe that nobody won on the Tower nomination debacle, he knows that foreign oil producers are now making the American public pay a high oil tax for his partisan embarrassment of President Bush. I trust the new, much touted, bipartisan Contra Aid package to help the Nicaraguan Rebels is a sign that President Bush has regained his lost stature so world oil prices will seek a fair and equitable level for both producers and consumers.

A Closer Look At Black And White Pride

Despite a series of racial incidents over two years, the faculty at the School of Literature, arts and Sciences at the University of Michigan voted down a proposal to require students to take a course on race, ethnicity and racism.

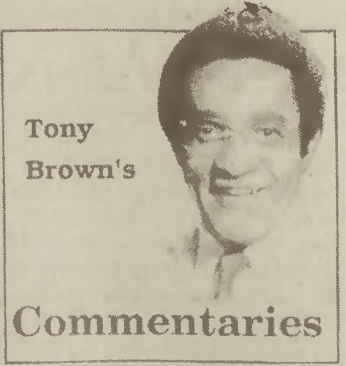
Incidents at Michigan have included verbal and physical assaults on black students and the distribution of KKK literature to black students' rooms. However, the one that received the widest publicity was the broadcast of racist jokes by a campus disc jockey.

As a matter of fact, I based a scene in my movie, "The White Girl," on that incident. At the fictional State University in the film, Kim (who suffers from racial anxiety) is verbally assaulted with racist jokes by two disc jockeys from "Campus Shock Radio." Ironically, Kim, although black herself, was insensitive to black people.

But it wasn't fiction that a black student from the University of Michigan wrote last week on the editorial pages of *The New York Times*. Veronica Woolridge said that she and other blacks were trying to graduate "amid racial tensions."

"Black and white students at the university are separate - economically unequal and socially exclusive. They separate themselves to find security in associating with members of their own race. Separatism complicates the communication disparity that already exists between the races in society at large.

"Black students have a kind of unwritten code. When we see each other, even if we don't know each other, we offer a greeting in support. In most of my classes, the few black students in a class of 200 will sit together, as they do in the cafeteria -- an attempt



Tony Brown's

Commentaries

to survive in a white, elite institution," Woolridge wrote.

"Competition results in acts of overt racism, like the flier that circulated last week declaring April as 'White Pride Time' -- featuring such events as 'counseling (sic) sessions on how to deal with uppity niggers."

Right next to Woolridge's piece was an article by a Stanford student who described himself as a "middle-class black student" and reminds me of Kim in "The White Girl." Stanford, he says, is a virtual interracial heaven.

Never mind that you saw and read about "minority student demonstrations" on the campus last year, it's the "outsiders" who are responsible for Stanford's reputation as racist, he adds. After all, he "mixes" at parties and "there are many interracial couples" whose "relationships are no longer an issue."

Therefore, we have two views of the white world from black students at white colleges. Woolridge describes the survival reality of blacks in a white world while the Stanford integrationist sees the world through the eyes of a Negro looking for a white woman.

In the meantime, the NCAA just announced in a new study that black athletes dominate their football and basketball teams, but not their graduation classes (39 percent have grade averages below a "C" and no chance of graduating).

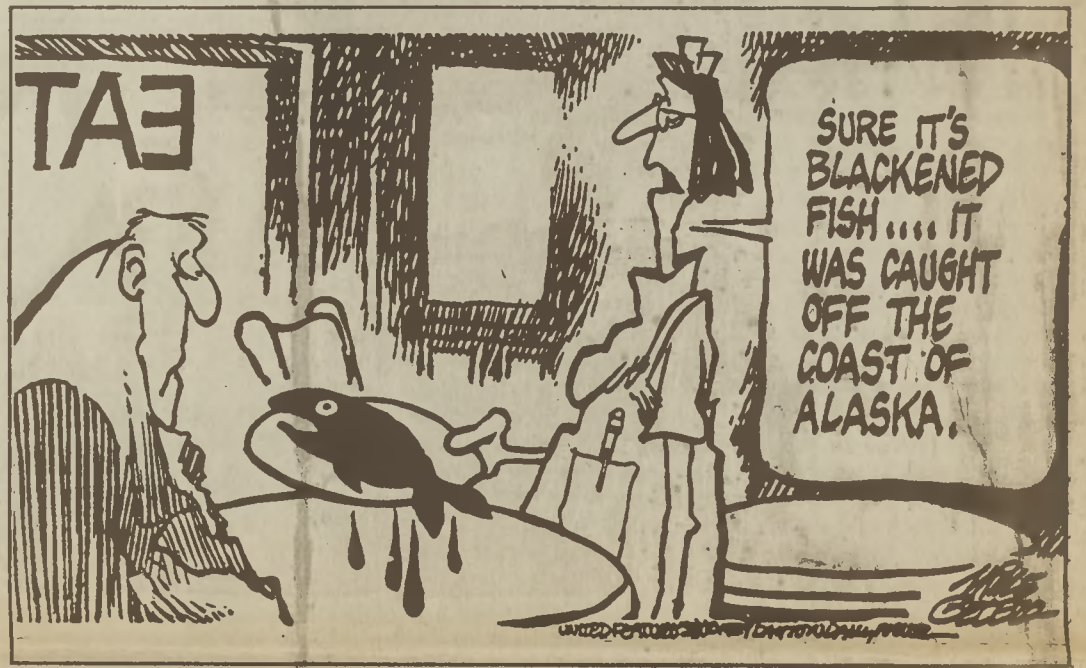
At 291 NCAA Division I football and basketball schools, four percent of the student enrollment is black, but 37 percent of the football players, 56 percent of the male basketball players and 33 percent of the female basketball players are black. It's my guess that the starting teams in football and basketball are 90 percent-plus blacks.

Yet, 70 percent of the black athletes in the study expressed feelings of being different; over 50 percent felt socially and emotionally isolated; and 33 percent reported at least six incidents of racial discrimination.

The study also found that black athletes at black colleges are better adjusted and integrated into extra-curricular activities than black athletes at white colleges, spend more time preparing for class and in class and have more sensitive coaches and teammates than black players at white colleges.

This study demonstrates that while racism is causing white pride at white colleges, scholarship and unity are the causes for black pride at black colleges.

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.



Who Are We Going To Blame?

What is happening? Millions of barrels of oil have covered the Alaskan waters. Down here in North Carolina, supplies of inexpensive oil and gas are drying up. We know that the two events have something to do with each other, and we are looking for somebody to blame.

In Alaska, who will it be? Exxon? The other oil companies? The government for allowing such a risky enterprise? The captain of the tanker who may have had too much to drink before the accident? The third mate who was on the bridge when the ship hit the reef?

Somebody, somebody, we have to find somebody to throw the book at. Somebody has to take the rap for this catastrophe. It was not an "Act of God" or some sort of "natural" calamity.

No, we have got to put the finger on somebody. Who is it going to be?

Meanwhile, our gas prices are shooting up. Five cents, ten cents, fifteen cents a gallon increases. Suddenly it's over a \$1 everywhere, even if you pump it yourself, wash your own window,



D.G. Martin

One-On-One

and pay cash.

It reminds us of the early 1970s when the OPEC oil cartel nearly strangled us by suddenly cutting back the supply of gas and raising prices.

Who is to blame for all this?

Remember back then when we promised that we would never again be dependent on foreign oil? We would cut back on consumption. We would downsize cars. Carpool. Ride buses and bicycles. Walk more. Lower the speed limit top 55 miles per hour everywhere.

We would make every sacrifice to be sure that we not be slaves to the automobile and foreign oil again.

We would find alternative sources of energy. And we would make our government and our businesses make plans for a future that worked without using so much energy -- one that was not dependent on everybody, going everywhere in their own car.

Who is to blame? Who is pushing our Governor and our legislature to borrow and spend billions of dollars to build new roads that will increase oil consumption by carrying more and more gas-burning cars? Who pushed to raise the speed limit back to 65? Who is driving a bigger car? Whose number one problem is where to park at work or at school?

Those of us who have to answer yes to some of those questions don't have to look far. The right person to blame for the Alaskan oil spill and rising gas prices is nearby.

Just find the nearest mirror.

Stand Up And Be Counted In '90 Census

Guest Editorial By Cong. Augustus Hawkins The 1990 census, an evaluation of America's population and demographic characteristics, will be the 21st in our nation's history, and the largest and most complex ever undertaken. It is of great importance that every American participate in the census survey.

An accurate record of your community's population and profile is extremely important in determining the share of federal and state assistance it will be eligible for in terms of allocation of loans, subsidies, grants, public housing, emergency funds, etc. Census information is used by the Congress and government agencies in both the planning and management of federal and local programs, and in the distribution of billions of dollars a year to local communities for school lunches, job training, education, police protection, and much more.

In addition to the federal government's use of the census, here are some examples of how civic

and other public officials used census facts and figures to help meet community needs:

- The high number of working women with small children in a community, revealed by a study of census data, prompted community leaders in a midwestern city to seek and win approval for a day care center.

- Using census numbers to bolster its request, a senior citizens organization argued successfully before county commissioners for a community center.

- During a severe heat wave, public health officials in St. Louis used census facts to locate neighborhoods with large numbers of the elderly; city workers went door-to-door, convincing many seniors to go to specifically designed air conditioned centers.

- In San Francisco, transportation planners used census information to select bus routes, subway stops, highways that needed widening.

It is also important to note

that the census count determines representation in the U.S. House of Representatives, state legislatures, county and city governments.

Historically, minority communities have been severely undercounted. This undercount translates into lost government funds for the communities that need this assistance the most. That is why I urge people who are concerned about the welfare of their community to cooperate with census takers. I also urge civic and community leaders to "get the word out" on the importance of an accurate census count.

By law, your answers to census questions are confidential. Information from the 1990 Census will be used only to provide statistical summaries, and your own particular answers cannot be identified. Don't be short-changed - remember an accurate census count benefits you and your children. Stand up and be counted.