

The Charlotte Post

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Editorials

Separate And Unequal Revisited

By HOYLE H. MARTIN
Editorial Writer

With thousands and thousands of young people graduating from the nation's colleges and universities this time of year, there are some little noticed but significant trends or developments that escape the eye of most people. Such people don't see the trends because they are understandably focusing on the joy and happiness of seeing a relative graduate with a four-year college degree.

What the careful observer sees is that on any typical, relatively large university, with a history of academic excellence, is a student body of primarily white youth who come from homes where both parents are college graduates and they have a family income of well over \$65,000 annually. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the careful observer sees an inner city community college where the majority of the students come from "blue collar" working families where few of the parents have college degrees and have annual incomes of less than \$30,000. Many of the students in these two-year colleges are well over 25-years of age, and a large percent of them are black females. Some of these young women have dependent children and may be living on public welfare assistance while trying to improve their situations.

These glaring differences in the type, quality and presumed educational needs of our nation's youth were stated clearly by Barbara Vabejda of *The Washington Post*. She wrote

on May 12, 1989, "John Hopkins (University) and the Community College of Baltimore represent two poles, the extreme ends of a hierarchy marked by glaring disparities." Vabejda's article entitled, "Class, Color and College," says candidly, "Higher education was once envisioned as the great equalizer in American society, providing anyone who was qualified with the credentials that would redress inequalities in background and truth."

This separate and unequal educational fact of life is occurring in spite of the real effort of many, if not most, predominately white universities to recruit, educate and graduate black youth. Ironically, however, many of these same institutions are reportedly imposing a rigid quota system in order to limit the number of Asian students.

Combined with reports on the decline of black male college students, the future of higher education among blacks appears to be bleak. Thus, the burden for alerting youth to the values of a college education falls on parents, teachers, school counselors, ministers, neighborhood support groups and good role models. The aim of all involved in the idea of boosting black youth interest in higher education is to help change values about life and education. Without a meaningful concerted effort that must be successful economic and social racism and discrimination will push black people back to their pre-1960s status.

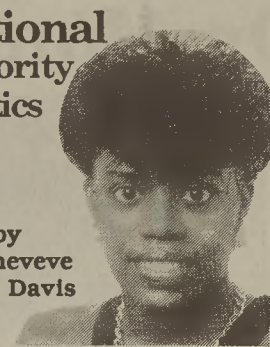
In 1983 when black leaders were looking for someone to run for president, Jackson came forth as the only person with the guts and the national recognition to pull it off. The "other blacks" Broder mentions, Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley and Atlanta's Andrew Young, held elective office and were on the political scene before Jackson

Rethink Jesse For D.C. Mayor

When the news first broke about Jesse Jackson's possible run for mayor of Washington, D.C., I immediately thought it was a splendid idea. Proponents said he would win the election hands-down, gain the governmental experience critics say he lacks, and be in a better position for a possible presidential run in 1996. At the same time, the move could cure Washington's malady of low spirits, and save the Democratic Party from itself.

National Minority Politics

by Gweneveve Daye Davis



Sounds great, doesn't it? It sounded great to me too, at first. But then everyone was for it, even those in the Democratic Party leadership and the Republican far-right, I became suspicious. Neither of these groups has ever been in Jackson's corner before, and I found two theories particularly puzzling.

Some suggest that Jackson's withdrawal from the 1992 presidential sweepstakes will diffuse the divisiveness with in the Democratic Party. They must have short memories. There was division in the party long before Jackson ran for president. And with no clear front-runner at this time, if Jackson does withdraw, there will likely again be at least seven "dwarfs" entering the primary season. The Democrats have to identify and nominate a nationally-known candidate who has a good chance of beating an incumbent Republican president; and there is none -- Michael Dukakis is too wounded, Lloyd Bentsen is too old, Albert Gore is too combative, and Richard Gephardt is too dull.

In 1983 when black leaders were looking for someone to run for president, Jackson came forth as the only person with the guts and the national recognition to pull it off. The "other blacks" Broder mentions, Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley and Atlanta's Andrew Young, held elective office and were on the political scene before Jackson

and chose, for whatever reason, not to throw their hats into the presidential ring. Jackson's campaigns have made it more palatable for the American public to accept a black politician as a presidential candidate. Rather than create a roadblock, he destroyed one.

Almost everyone has said this move would make everybody a winner--the party, the city of Washington, and Jackson. But there are drawbacks, from the vantage point of Jackson's political career.

First, if Jackson's goal is to someday be president, the position of mayor is not on the career path. None of the resumes of our last eight presidents lists "mayor" as the experience which put them on the fast track to the White House. And if we look at the careers of most mayors in office today, they often have difficulty getting elected on a statewide basis after their terms expire. Being mayor can sometimes be a dead-end job.

Second, the District of Columbia is in such dire straits that it will take more than four years to fix it. The problems have become intractable in many segments of the population, and it will take almost an entire generation to change the attitudes and lifestyles of those most affected by the guagmire of drugs, poverty, family breakdown, and lack of preparedness which currently prevails. Jackson could get locked into a situation

where he is forced to remain until the problems are resolved, or face harsh criticism if he leaves before the job is done.

Third, he would not be broadening his base, but rather limiting it. Critics already charge that Jackson is only addressing the interests of blacks and that his "Rainbow Coalition" is essentially a fraud. The portion of the nation's capital which elects the mayor is overwhelmingly black, and he would be locked into representing this constituency for four or more years. This would not create a problem for his base, the black community. But it would add to the perception that he only has their interests at heart.

Finally, detractors will never be satisfied, no matter what he does. If, by some miracle of miracles, Jackson can, in four years, transform Washington, D.C. into a topia, some will say that it is not enough, that it doesn't mean that he can govern the nation, and that he is still too radical. Affiliation with Jackson has now become a litmus test for many politicians, black and white. To alert potential voters that candidates are either liberal, radical or black, the description "endorsed the Rev. Jesse Jackson" is being used to characterize would-be public servants in political campaigns. Few are neutral about him and those who sincerely dislike him will never be converted.

Still, the prospect of having so much power in a city which is a center for media, culture and international decision-making, may outweigh any negatives that go along with running for the job. As Jackson ponders his decision, my only advice is: If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is.

Ms. Davis, based in Houston, Texas, is publisher/editor of the monthly newsletter *National Minority Politics*.

Show Time Scholars?

Last year, comedian and star of the television hit, "The Cosby Show," Bill Cosby, was the commencement speaker at the University of South Carolina. Closer to home and in 1989, actress Phylicia Rashad, Cosby's wife on the same show, was the graduation speaker at Barber-Scotia College last Sunday in Concord. Similarly, actor Danny Glover will keynote Johnson C. Smith University's commencement on Sunday, May 21 at 2 p.m. in Owens Auditorium. These institutions are not unique in the selection of show business personalities as commencement speakers.

This trend reminds us of the increasing charges leveled at the prime time television newscasts of the big three --- CBS, NBC and ABC --- who seem, at times, to be providing more entertainment than hard news. This is evident too in the way they select prime time news anchors. The men must be white males ranging in age from about 38 to 52 with a head full of hair; possibly with a few strands of gray for that distinguished look. Then too with dark conservative suits and ties to reflect the image. Add the distinct voice and you have what the networks want and will only have.

If there happens to be a female prime time news anchor she must be in her late 20s to the early 40s in age, good looking, dressed sexy

but not overdone, have long pretty hair that is well groomed, and have a good television voice and a pleasing personality. The intent is to get the television viewing audience to turn to their channel as much to see and admire the newscasters as it is to hear what they are saying.

Likewise, we have to wonder why our higher education institutions are leaning toward show business people to deliver such important speeches to their graduating classes. It would appear to us that scholars on the cutting edge of new research that would reflect the kind of world the graduates will be living in and competing for jobs would be more in tune with what a college or a university has as its mission.

Both Bill Cosby and Phylicia Rashad gave their respective graduating audiences some motivational thoughts to carry along with their degrees but both addresses lacked any depth and there left little, if any, impressions on the graduates' minds. The listening audiences appeared to be more awed by who they were seeing and listening to than by what the speakers had to say.

Undoubtedly, the graduating classes liked the excitement of seeing a show business but that is not what academic higher education is all about.

Reid Made The Right Choice

The Jack Claiborne/ Ed Williams *Charlotte Observer* debate (May 13) over whether J. R. Reid did the right thing in choosing to leave UNC-Chapel Hill to pursue an NEA career appears to be of little value.

First, Williams referred to his personal experience as a two time dropout before getting a college degree. Since there are literally thousands of students who dropout out of college each year to go to work, some out of economic necessity as did Mr. Williams, and some simply because they desire to move more quickly into the world of work. Williams and the thousands like him who left college to earn a living cannot be compared to the situation involving J. R. Reid.

Secondly, while we don't disagree with everything that Claiborne said, one very important factor was left out of his analysis. That is, if we as a nation did not have continued lingering racism there would at least be some role models outside of sports that youth, especially black, could look to. Therefore, we find it difficult to agree with Claiborne's viewpoint that J. R. Reid is setting a bad role model by choosing the sports/work world as opposed to one more year of college.

Let's face it, there are few people in any endeavor who would pass up a possible million dollar plus contract to finish one more year in college. J.R. Reid did in our judgment the best thing for himself.

Memorable Words Are Hard To Come By

It is commencement time. A lot of us will be at some kind of graduation exercise this spring. There will be lots of speeches. Who will remember them?

I don't remember any of the speeches at my high school graduation--even though I gave one of them.

Can you remember anything that was said at your graduation? I mean anything other than your own name as you crossed the stage to get your diploma, shake the hand of a school official, flip your tassel, and head back to your seat thinking, "It's over. I am all done with this."

Come to think of it, how many speeches of any kind can you remember? If you are like me, not many. Can you even remember last Sunday's sermon in your own church? Can you remember the newspaper article or column that you read just before you got to this one?

Be honest. And know that recalling what we hear and read does not come easy for any of us.

It makes you wonder about those of us who like to give speeches and like to write newspaper columns. I guess we are arrogant enough to think that we are different--and that people will remember what we say or write.

In my mind I know that few will read these words, fewer still



D.G. Martin

One-On-One

(if any at all) will remember, but in my heart says, "Keep talking, keep writing, somebody will hear you say something that will be helpful to them."

That must be what most graduation speakers think, too. And that is why there will be so many long graduation speeches this spring.

Fortunately, some speakers are different. Did you hear about the speech Greensboro College earlier this month?

"Never give up. Never, never, never give up."

That was it. The entire speech. Too short? Maybe, but everybody who heard it will remember it. Is the message too simple? Maybe, but it is a good strong, message. Better to be too short than too long.

There is a graduation speech that most people in my home-

town remember--even though it was given 30 years ago. A top graduate at Davidson College gave the following commencement address:

"More than 1900 years ago, a wise man said, 'Love thy neighbor as thyself.' I have nothing significant to add."

The crowd was stunned. It seemed rude and disrespectful. It broke so radically from the normal. But today, looking back, that message seems right on point. And I remember it.

Short speeches are hard to write. So are short columns. But short ones are better ones.

Someone once asked President Woodrow Wilson how long it took him to prepare an hour long speech. He said that it took about five minutes to prepare. "Then how long does it take to prepare a five minute speech?" "That takes hours and hours," the President said.

It does take longer to figure out how to say something important or complicated in a few words. But those of us who want people to remember what we say or write had better learn how to do it.

Wait. I know what you are thinking. "This guy has made his point. Why doesn't he stop? Why doesn't he follow his own advice and keep his own column short?" You're right. I'm done.

Probe Into School System's Handling Of Discrimination Cases Is Badly Needed

Guest Editorial
By Rudolph Seth

In an unprecedented move, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board upheld a decision made by Chairman Ashley Hogewood, to deny a hearing to a group of black men who work at the School Supply Warehouse located at 3901 Craig Avenue. This action has sparked outrage from the black community and among other school employees. Few understand why such a negative posture was taken by Hogewood in denying the hearing normally called for as a routine part of the school system's Equal Employment Opportunity Complaint Process.

Some speculate that Hogewood himself violated the process by singularly rejecting the request from the men for a hearing and then giving at least two separate invalid reasons for his actions. Hogewood was later faced with the relentless deter-

mination of these workers to be heard, and the request from Board member Arthur Griffin, to bring the issue publicly before the full Board. The discourse during the Board meeting by Board attorney Hugh Campbell was clearly designed to confuse the issues and support Hogewood's decision. Hogewood even asked for support and urged defeat of the motion by Griffin to allow the hearing. The motion was, in fact, defeated by a 6-3 vote. Board members Griffin, Battle, and Martin were outvoted by the other members.

The surprising aspect was that six Board members, two of them lawyers, voted to set a precedent by improperly denying the men access to the hearing process. Few observers accepted the reasons given as valid. The potential impact of the decision affects all workers and students. There is reason for concern. Arthur Griffin reports that in

researching the issues, he learned that such an action has never before been taken. In fact, he recalled a previous hearing whereby a parallel situation existed. Also, Griffin learned that contrary to statements made at the hearing, a fact finding investigation was done by the system's EEO Office and a decision was rendered with recommendations to rectify the problem. Griffin admitted that he is troubled by this new direction. Longtime board member George Battle, is said to be similarly concerned.

While expressing concern and admitting to being confused about the reasons for denying the hearing, Thelma Johnson, the CMS Equal Opportunity Officer, said she does not foresee any significant changes in how her office processes complaints. She said that she has received no prior or subsequent directives regarding the matter and

therefore expects to proceed as in the past.

Nevertheless, the SCLC plans to examine the impact of the Board's actions and to launch a probe into the workings of the process for addressing employment discrimination and for adequately supporting those who are affected by discrimination and racism. The events leading to the decision to deny the hearing and the decision itself, are viewed as acts of oppression. It is most disheartening to realize that administrators and Board members would engage in or support oppression. It is the intent of SCLC to force out the sources of the oppressive conditions in the school system, denounce it, and demand it be discontinued.

While one might expect the Board of Education and administration to deny that prejudice and oppression played in their decision, there

are too many questions related to the reasons given; evidence of inaccurate information presented about decisions made; arguments against the hearing which distorted the truth; misrepresentation of the facts about the process used inside the system; false information about the cases having been resolved; and inconsistent application of a rule on using the complaint process. One can't help but wonder how many others have suffered oppression at the hands of those in whom we have so blindly placed our trust.

These men have not lost their faith. They have sent a letter to Ashley Hogewood clarifying some of the misinformation and asking for a reconsideration of the decision. We support these brave men and urge the Board to respond in a positive fashion. What is there to fear? The truth? The truth must be told. SCLC is planning a cooperative

community venture to address issues similar to this one. A Call for Action Hearing will be scheduled in the near future to bring together concerned citizens, community leaders, organization representatives, and persons affected by experiences of this nature. The goal is to determine and prioritize critical issues and to assess the level of commitment to work toward change.

Issues to be discussed include such topics as student achievement, pupil assignment, sites for new school buildings, building renovations at current sites, employee promotion, student participation in school clubs and activities, the black dropout and suspension rate, and the treatment of employees. An all out attempt will be made to determine the nature and extent of the problems students and employees face on a daily basis.