

"Girl" Beats Hollywood's Top Hits And Proves It Can Be Done

"It gives me great pleasure to say, I told you so." That was my brief one-sentence paragraph letter to a Hollywood studio big shot who told me several months ago that my yet-to-be released movie, "The White Girl," would never make it commercially in movie theaters.

But instead of accepting his opinion of my movie or my ability to market it, I stuck with my own vision and the reactions of the people who had seen it at the various fund-raisers around the country. I told him then that I knew that people liked it, that I had studied the positive reactions of more than 100 audiences and I was satisfied that it was a winner.

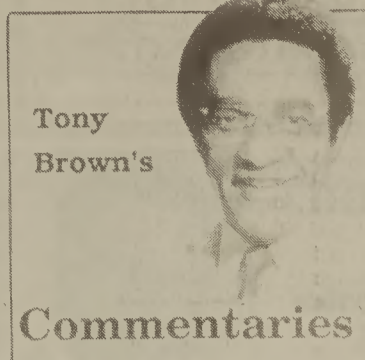
Moreover, I told him that if I did not have enough intelligence to take advantage of this golden opportunity, that I deserved to lose my \$2-million investment.

Between May 5 and May 11 at the Liberty Theatre in Hamilton,

Bermuda, "The White Girl" beat the house attendance and box office record of Hollywood's best and proved me correct. The only movie to draw more people and make more money at the Liberty is Eddie Murphy's blockbuster "Coming To America," which earned \$128 million in the U. S. and \$200 million worldwide.

Why? Because our small-scale quality movie-hit hit home with a people who are starved for themselves, hungry for a realistic look at themselves and tired of the updated "noble black mummies," prostitutes, gratuitous sex and unnecessary violence. In addition to peddling racial stereotypes, Hollywood has largely lost its ability to tell a good story.

How else can you explain our \$2-million movie beating "Crocodile Dundee II" (which cost \$16 million to make); "Raw" (production cost: \$8 million) at the Liberty Theatre? "Crocodile



went on to earn \$130 million and "Raw" did \$50 million worth of business.

"Girl" also beat some of Hollywood's other mega-hits: "Beverly Hills Cop II," which earned \$170 million; "Color Purple" (\$100 million); "Rambo II" (\$70 million); and "Fatal Attraction" (\$153 million).

While black people cannot compete with Hollywood's

mega-bucks to establish an alternative movie industry, we do have something they don't have. For example, "Girl" delivers a unique emotional experience. And that personal experience with fellow human beings who understand their suffering -- and most importantly -- their dreams, is a rare movie experience.

I've watched black and white teenagers walk out the theater crying and vowing to never touch drugs -- ever, and in some cases never again. I have talked to parents, who after seeing it, are going to make sure their children see it when it opens for the general public later this year.

"Its powerful anti-drug theme is directed, with chilling force, at our young people. It should be made compulsory viewing in schools throughout Bermuda. Go and see it -- and take your child along," the *Royal Gazette's*

film critic wrote. Many Hollywood movies are so full of sex and violence that many -- especially in the religious community -- no longer bother to go to the movies.

Manager Nelda Simons of the Liberty Theatre was so moved by the church community's attendance that she remarked: "I am excited about the response to this film because it enables us to tap into what appears to be a non-moviegoing audience. Many people said that they had never been to the movies before and, to my knowledge, non-moviegoers are usually within the religious and church communities." Liberty's audiences were also multi-racial, attracted by the film's blend of entertainment with an anti-drug theme.

The Bermuda box office success has greatly enhanced our expectations for the film when it is released. It shows that "Girl" can, and black people can, com-

pete with Hollywood when it opens with local people and groups as our distributors (we call them Buy Freedom Partners) in local theaters. Information: (212) 575-0876.

Yes, I'm excited, but my feelings extend to what we together, as a people, can do in this crucial movie industry. We can't compete with General Motors and AT&T, but we're uniquely positioned to eventually dominate the movie industry. Our people's annual \$2.2 billion for movie tickets (50 percent of all sold) can be redirected back to our community and our own producers and our images enhanced at the same time.

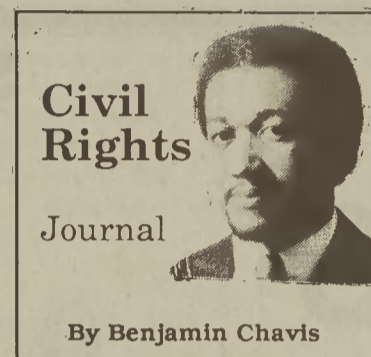
"The White Girl" alone won't get us there, but so far it is proving that it can be done.

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

Light-Skinned Vs. Dark-Skinned

One of the dangers that the victims of centuries of racism in the United States need to be cautioned about is the pseudo-struggle between light-skinned and dark-skinned African Americans. One of the basic strategies of the powerful and oppressive forces of this society is to divide and sub-divide racial and ethnic communities against themselves. The history of the United States is a history of racism. Unfortunately, the victims of racism sometimes get caught up in their own victimization by fostering the continuation of racist stereotypes and myths along the color line.

The established media takes great delight when a chance is given to expose internal contradictions within the African American community. In a recent front-page article in the *New York Times* entitled, "Lawsuit Raises Issues of Color Bias Between Blacks," the issue of conflict between light-skinned and dark-skinned African Americans was highlighted. The fact that there persists in some communities a contrived notion of bitterness and envy between light-skinned and dark-skinned African Ameri-

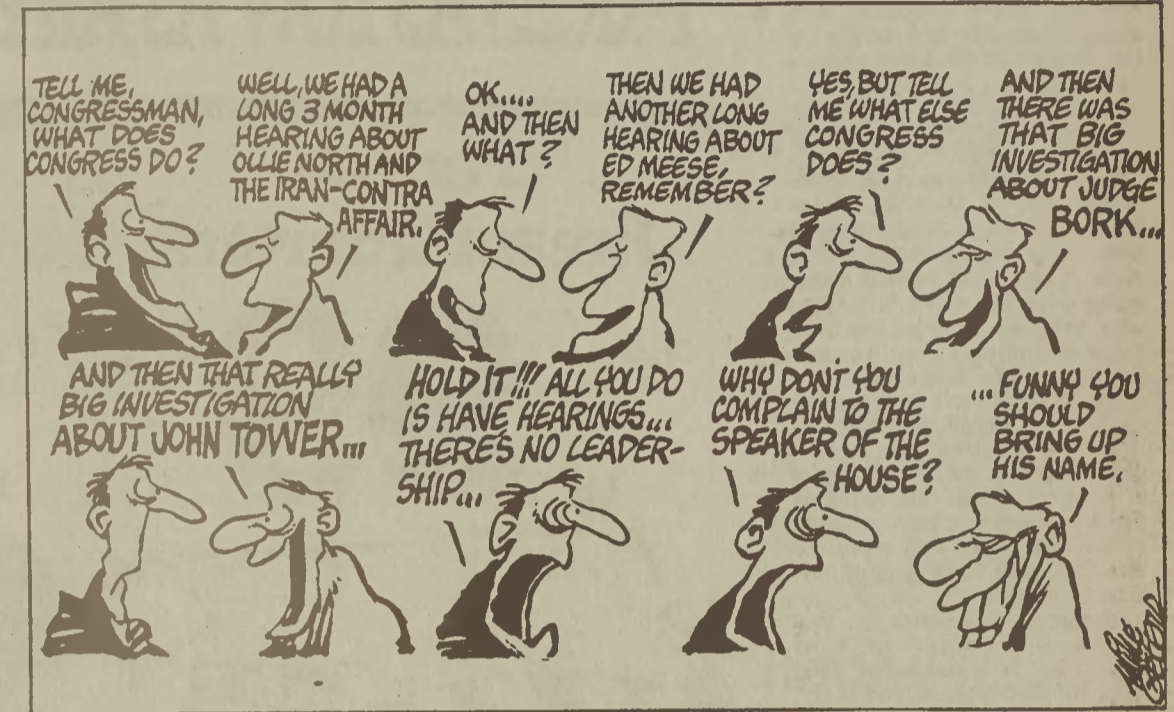


cans is a sad commentary. One of the achievements of the civil rights and African American cultural revolution of the 1960s was the re-evaluating of the relationships between all members of the African American community without prejudice due to skin color.

Interestingly, it is out of the city of Atlanta, Georgia, a place where African Americans in particular have made great progress, that a recent lawsuit is advancing in the federal courts. The two plaintiffs are both African American women. One is dark-skinned and one is light-skinned. Ms. Tracy Lynn Marrow, an employee of the Atlanta

office of the Internal Revenue Service, has sued the IRS and Ms. Ruby Lewis who is the dark-skinned supervisor of Ms. Marrow who is light-skinned. Ms. Marrow contends that she has been discriminated against in her employment at the IRS by Ms. Lewis because of Ms. Lewis' "prejudice against Ms. Marrow because of her light-skinned color."

The fact that I have to use these descriptions to describe the bone of contention speaks to the depth of the problem. Who would believe that in 1989 two sisters would be squaring off in a federal court because of the perception or the reality that skin color is the problem? All African Americans as well as all peoples in this world have been created equally by God. If African Americans continue to carry forth the racist myths and stereotypes of this society, then the resulting division and internal conflicts will only serve to further perpetuate the exploitation and oppression of the community. It matters not what color you are. What matters is how you use your life to ensure that justice and freedom is for everyone.



New Hope In The Bush Administration

Guest Editorial
By Charles E. Belle
"If we want to help George Bush lead America to a new era of greatness, then we must be the party of all the people"

Lee Atwater, Chairman Republic Nat'l. Comm.
It is not to say that the chosen few African Americans at the top of the Bush Administration are romancing the stone, but they might be better off kissing the blarney stone. At least there is hope being given in return. Representative Julian C. Dixon, president, Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, believes "A platform should be a promise." President Bush has to be more generous in granting good positions to African Americans if he plans on living up to his "kinder and gentler" platform promise to African Americans.

While Congressman Dixon was demanding more from the African American community in his comments, care can be taken by Bush for all Americans. "The problem is that our country, and particularly our minority communities, face serious difficulties that won't yield to fence-sitting." Therefore, the selections of stewards to show solutions to the President of the United States, must be smart and numerous. No one person has the answer for crime, crack

and unemployment in the nation's minority communities.

The African American and "other races" are growing faster than the white population in this nation. In the next century, such a shift in population, according to the Census Bureau, U. S. Department of Commerce, that a re-ordering of U.S. priorities for people is in order. The drop in white births, immigration and African American population progress pushes the figures in favor of finding solutions to non-European American problems to the top. As always in the words of a late NAACP leader, "blacks are the cutting edge," of change in this country."

Cabinet-level positions or should we say "position" since President John F. Kennedy has not changed for people of color. Louis Sullivan, former president, Morehouse School of Medicine, is the sole role model at the top at the moment. Mr. Frederick D. McClure, currently assistant to the President for Legislative affairs, is joined by too few other African Americans. As assistant treasurer of Pepsi-Cola Co., Wendell W. Gunn, is chief of staff, Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Joe Watkins, an ordained minister and former assistant to the Vice President, who is he? is associate director of the White House Office of

Public Liaison.

First Lady's Press Secretary Anna Perez is currently the lone African American woman who has won confirmation. A Communications commentator who is partially responsible for the rash of right wing anti-African American aid publicity by the *Wall Street Journal* for the past four-and-a-half years, Joseph Perkins is deputy assistant for domestic policy, office of the Vice President. A paltry few with their own basic background problems for communicating as "kinder and gentler" policy of the President for over 30 million African Americans.

A handful of other African Americans are asking for appointed positions. William Lucas, assistant attorney general for civil rights, a non-color-choice, Constance "Connie" Newman, director of the office of personnel management, Jewel LaFontant, assistant secretary of state for Refugee Affairs and Steve Glaude, deputy secretary of HUD, are all waiting in the wings with confirmation by Congress pending. President Bush has got time to actually get more than a few superior African Americans in his administration. After all, an individual is always known by the company he/she keeps.

A Veto That Will Hurt Our Families

Guest Editorial
By MARIAN EDELMAN

President Bush's decision to veto the minimum wage increase recently passed by Congress hits black families where we live. Millions of black Americans are now struggling along at or near the current bottom wage of \$3.35 per hour. Black women are twice as likely to make the minimum wage than are white men. To veto the minimum wage increase is to veto their hopes.

Our families need White House help--not White House opposition-- in their struggle to earn enough to survive. The poverty rate among young, black families and black families headed by a woman alone are particularly high. Nearly half of all the black children in America today are poor. A minimum wage veto can only push more and more of our families into poverty.

The President's excuses for vetoing the minimum wage do not make sense.

The President claims the wage increase is too high. He's wrong. If anything, the increase does not go far enough. The \$4.55 rate proposed by Congress would still leave the minimum wage nearly 70 cents below its 1981 level, once you figure in inflation. Even after the increase that the President says goes too far, the minimum wage would still leave a three-person family well below the poverty level. We cannot in good conscience do less.

The President complains that his "training wage" idea was ignored. Not true. The bill voted by Congress does allow lower two-month "training wages" to be paid to inexperienced workers. But President Bush wanted to go much further, forcing even our most experienced workers to get a low "training" pay for six months every time they start a new job. This means that workers in jobs with a high turnover could be stuck forever on a low-wage treadmill.

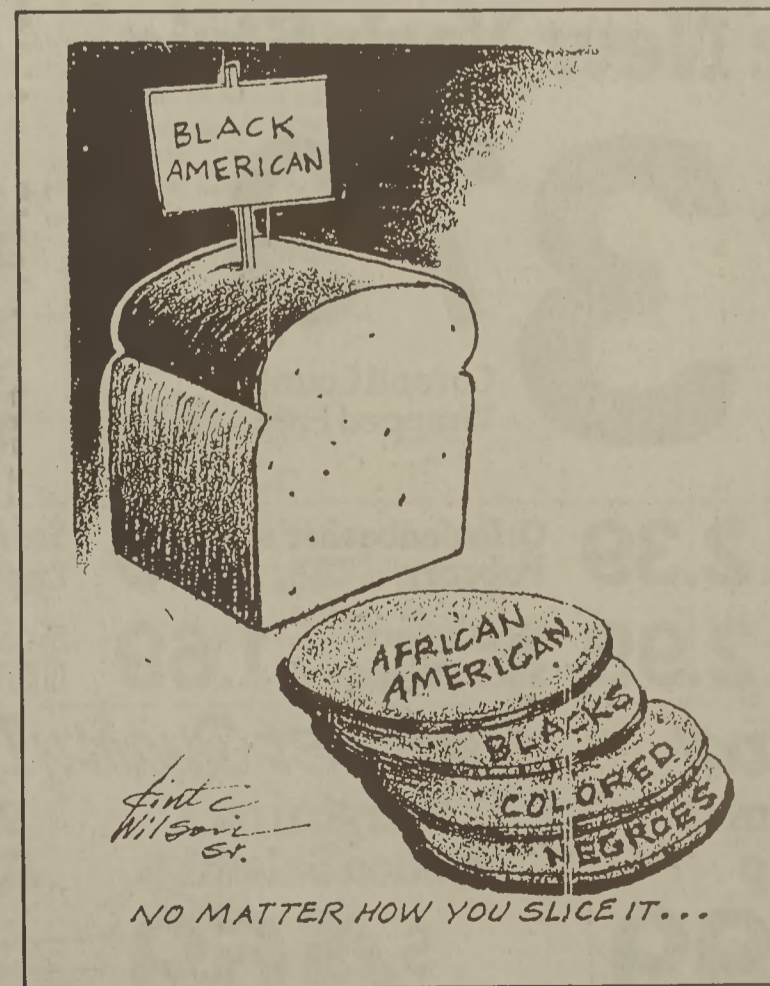
The President says that Congress had refused to compromise. Recent history says otherwise. Congress has greatly scaled back its original proposal to raise the minimum wage. Last year, the House of Representatives proposed to boost it to \$5.05 per hour.

President Bush cannot explain away this decision. It reflects an insensitivity to those at the bottom of the economic ladder, at the same time the President is making tax cuts for capital gains taxes a priority to benefit those at the top.

We must urge our representa-

tives in Congress to stand up to the President and insist on a decent minimum wage increase. To let your members know you back raising the minimum wage to \$4.55 an hour, write them (Hon. Terry Sanford, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20515 and Rep. Alex McMillan, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515) or call them at 202-224-3121 and ask for them by name. Do it now!

Marian Wright Edelman is President of the Children's Defense Fund, a national voice for children.



Education Is Critical To Black Citizens

Guest Editorial
By Don Brown

Reading scores among black students are deplorable. Each year all third, sixth and eighth graders take the California Achievement Test and one area where performance is measured is reading. For the past three years blacks have scored considerably lower than whites. Scores are reported as median percentiles, which describes the average student. The median percentile score for the group or the average student was 50.

See chart for results of the past three years.

Moreover, the Westside Schools Task Force stated that students who drop out of school have actually given up on school at an early age. One of the deficits that the potential dropout carrier to the secondary level is a severe reading problem. Reading failure causes children an immense loss of self-esteem during the school years.

In as much as reading is critical to the academic development of all students, steps need to be taken to improve reading achievement among black students within our school district.

The first step that needs to be taken is that specific goals for student performance must be articulated and documented by the Board of Education; but most of all, these goals must be

	1986		1987		1988	
	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites
3rd grade	32	67	32	68	32	67
6th grade	31	68	30	67	31	68
8th grade	28	66	30	68	35	69

translated into measurable performance objectives. The board should adopt a policy statement or resolution proclaiming that reading scores for black students will be at the 50th percentile by 1991 and the 75th percentile by 1993 system wide. The school board must accept the responsibility for being accountable for reading achievement in the school system, and they must establish goals and effect plans to reach those goals.

The second step is parental involvement. Black parents must get involved in the education of their children. We can no longer just sit back and assume that the educational needs of our children are sufficiently being met. Historically, black parents have trusted the teachers and school administrators to make the right decisions for

their children. We can no longer afford to continue to function under this premise. We must form partnerships with our teachers--who in many instances are trying to be social workers, surrogate parents, policemen, drug counselors, and psychologists as well as teachers. They desperately need our help.

African Americans have a huge stake in education, and we had better get involved in protecting that interest. Education for black Americans is a matter of survival. For whites it determines the quality of life--for blacks it is life! The mission of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System as proclaimed by Dr. Peter Relic is "Every child a reader," a vision that all of us share. If this vision is to become reality, black parents and the black community must get involved.

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

Let us hear your comments, ideas and opinions. Write to:

Letters To The Post
P.O. Box 30144
Charlotte, N.C. 28230

Please include name, address and phone number. We edit letters for clarity and grammar.