

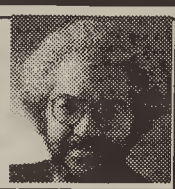
Black liberation: where do we go from here?

As we enter the 1996 presidential election campaign, African Americans are confronted with a series of candidates who cannot or will not address our interests.

More than ever before, we need to evaluate what has happened to the black community — politically, economically and socially over the past few years, and map a strategy which will lead to greater empowerment. Black liberation will not be achieved by some pleasant-sounding phrases of white politicians, either Democrats or Republicans.

Black liberation must instead be based on a critical analysis of the social forces which have divided our people, and what political steps can bring us together. Many of our current political dilemmas can be traced back to the collapse of Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition as a national, mass political force after the 1988 presidential election. As extreme conservatives seized power in the

Manning Marable



1994 elections, millions of African-Americans felt that their interests were unrepresented and unheard. Conditions in U.S. central cities, and particularly for blacks and Latinos, reached a critical state. As corporations relocated jobs and capital investment from urban centers, unemployment became widespread. Social services, health delivery systems, public housing and public transportation all experienced sharp cutbacks. The quality of urban education seriously declined. Increasingly, the criminal justice system and prisons became the chief means for warehousing unemployed black and Latino young people. By 1995, 30 percent of all black males in their 20s nationwide were either in prison or jail, on probation,

'Democratic transformation' must reach the grassroots level

parole or awaiting trial.

The Los Angeles social uprising of April-May 1992, symbolized black collective outrage against the brutality of the police and racism of the legal system, with the festering grievances of inferior schools, poor housing, second class health care, and widespread unemployment. As racial polarization and reaction increased throughout white political society, African Americans were forced to reevaluate sharply their strategies for political and social change.

In 1993 the position of NAACP national secretary was narrowly won by Benjamin Chavis over Jesse Jackson. Chavis pursued a complex agenda: advocating liberal and progressive public policies and social programs; building strong black institu-

tions and coalitions, establishing cooperative dialogues between all representatives of the black community, including Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam; encouraging productive contacts with the alienated hip-hop generation, urban black gangs and young people inside the criminal justice system. Chavis' approach briefly won the remarkable support from a broad spectrum of black activists, from nationalists like Maulana Karenga and Haki Madhubuti, to black socialists such as Angela Davis, Cornel West and Charlene Mitchell.

Within one year, a campaign to oust Chavis was orchestrated in the media, supported quietly by more moderate, old-style civil rights leaders and many "post-black" elected officials. The political space which remained was quickly

seized by Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam, advocating a socially conservative agenda markedly to the right of both Jackson and Chavis.

As Martin Luther King, Jr., once asked, "Where do we go from here?" We must recognize that there is an alternative to Farrakhan's black nationalism. It is the politics of "democratic transformation:" challenging the real structures of inequality and power, restricting the power of corporate capital, expanding social programs to ensure greater opportunities for human development, and building multicultural, multi-class resistance movements.

The politics of "democratic transformation" must be grounded in the real struggles for empowerment by African-Americans around day-to-day issues. A political culture of resistance must be constructed around practical concerns: health care, the environment, reproductive rights, housing, and education. As the practice of coalition building occurs in

communities, different groups of people may learn to overcome their stereotypes and fears of each other. Part of this process must certainly occur within electoral politics, both through the support of progressive Democrats who are committed to this agenda, and more decisively, by the development of independent politics represented by the New Party, Labor Party Advocates, the Green parties, the Campaign for a New Tomorrow led by activist Ron Daniels, and other organizations.

The next decisive struggles will be waged at the community level, in thousands of neighborhoods, through efforts to transform the consciousness and political practices of those who are most oppressed by the system.

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Championing U.S. workers' cause

Sherman Miller



The 1996 general election is now upon us and the national leadership is merely offering the American people demagoguery over balancing the national budget. Yes, a balanced budget is a significant objective, but these politicians are closing their eyes to the real issue in the general election which is job security. In the last four years, the political leadership has allowed the dehumanization of the American worker so that many people feel they are now de facto chattel in the economic mainstream.

During the tenure of former President Ronald Reagan, the national psyche started its shift to dehumanizing the worker. President Reagan showed the word that America's labor movement

was impotent when he fired the striking air traffic controllers. Globalization was legitimated and many American people found their jobs being exported to foreign nations under the guise of improved productivity (a euphemism for cheap labor). I also got the impression that the American worker was inferior to the Japanese worker, who was elevated to the

This demise of U.S. corporate paternalism is occurring in four distinct phases. In the 1960 and '70s, some people complained that Americans were living too high and we were using up too many of the world's resources. These complainers suggested that Americans are "fat, dumb, and happy."

In the 1980s, globalization forced American industry to alter its wasteful ways to be competitive in the global marketplace. This meant to stop the financial bleeding that pass practices such as featherbedding were now obsolete. Productivity gains became a must to prevent many businesses from being forced into bankruptcy court and this flirt with financial ruin drove the push to eliminate redundant and non-essential work.

In the early 1990s, corporate downsizing evolved from a tool to foster corporate competitiveness in the global marketplace into a weapon to control inflated salaries by merely lowering worker expectations through employment insecurity. Many

major corporations embarked on downsizing programs which severely limited employment options for would-be job seekers. Thus, downsizing became a charged word and it made holding onto one's job tantamount to a pay raise and it legitimated low pay increases as the norm. Today, people shudder at the thought of accepting that "Lean and Mean" are the pervasive mind-set for many corporations.

America's downtrodden work-force must expect the 1996 presidential hopefuls to show leadership in the emancipation of the American worker from the ravishes of corporate downsizing. Presidential hopefuls must offer their visions on how America's workers can share in the bounty of productivity and go to sleep at night feeling reasonably certain that they will have a job tomorrow. It is now very disquieting that the general election degenerated into a tug-of-war over merely giving the American people gobbledygook on the potential horrible fallout from unbalanced federal budget to quell our nerves.

Columnist **SHERMAN MILLER** writes from Wilmington, Del.



status of a god.

A legacy of Reagan-era actions is that high paying manufacturing jobs requiring low skill levels have just about faded away. It is now commonplace to hear major corporations ballyhoo expansions in foreign nations in one breath and hand out pink slips in the next breath.

Should color-blind society be goal?

By **Sidney Morse**
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER
PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

In recent weeks we have witnessed the O.J. Simpson verdict and the onslaught of media attention given to its general undesirability. Shortly following was the largest political rally ever to be held in the nation's capital, the Million Man March, and now America is left in a whirlpool over the question of race and what its meaning will be in the context of our daily lives and in the lives of our children.

In an effort to reduce the rising temperature of racial reasoning that has been an obvious by product of these recent events, some participants in the debate have uttered a question, echoed by many: "Why can't we have a 'color-blind' society where people are viewed by their individual merit and nothing else?" Some of those same people, prior to the current controversy, used to say that the reason O.J. was successful was because he "transcended color." That when they looked at him they did not see a "black" man. The people that utter those state-

ments have also attached the same kind of illustration when describing the enormous popularity of Gen. Colin Powell. And now the argument emerging as the most frequently used to justify the dismantling of affirmative action is the need to "build a 'color-blind' society." It seems that the principal motivation to move toward this laudable goal is

often spawned by two separate and unique desires. One emanates from those that legitimately want to create a world where racial and ethnic categorization have little to do with the outcome of one's life. A world where "equality of opportunity" is a reality and not a myth. Others, less genuine in their stated goal, either consciously or subconsciously, see the path to eliminating racial and ethnic division resulting from the absorption of all other cultures into one — and, not coincidentally, that one happens to be their own. Examination of these two motivating principles raises the questions, "Is color-blindness an essential

component of achieving either of these goals?" and "Is it really possible to create a 'color-blind' society or is this just another unattainable myth?" Let us look just a little more closely at this concept. To establish a color-blind society will require arrival to a point where its members are viewed as colorless. This concept, examined in the context of

American society today, is an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms, when you consider that the combination of all people of color constitute nearly 27 percent of the total population, more than a quarter of the entire country.

To ask an African American, particularly one that is identifiably of African heritage, to believe that he or she is viewed as being the same as their fellow White American is unnatural and a rejection of whom they really are. Immediate difficulty is found in asking someone to be something that they clearly are not.

America has made two "strategic" errors that now



haunt us. She has failed to recognize racial differences on a conscious level, pretending that they don't exist, while subconsciously discriminating in the most fundamental ways because of those same differences. In a "perceived" interest of fostering the process of assimilation, mainstream society continues to insist that African-Americans relinquish their ethnic identity and yet at the same time consistently sends codes of communication to remind them that their existence is anchored in an ethnic context.

This dichotomy of reason has caused America to be less than compelling in its motivation to cultivate and develop its racial minorities so that they might fully participate in the bounty that this great nation offers and, at the same time, strengthen the country as a whole. Instead, it has established that the ticket for entry into the arena of opportunity is that racial identity be given up while offering no great reward for that abandonment.

SIDNEY MORSE, a resident of Los Angeles, is author of "Strategic Progressivism: A Solution For African-Americans."

Letters to the Editor

King towers over Farrakhan

William Reed of the National Newspaper Publishers Association writes that in an informal poll of the staff of the NNPA Louis Farrakhan has been named the Black Press "Man of the Year," for 1995 (The Post, Jan. 18).

Given the criteria by which Men of the Year are picked, Minister Farrakhan clearly deserves the title. But in writing his article, Reed says that, "...some believe (Farrakhan) has eclipsed even the stature of Martin Luther King at his apex." That is a conclusion which calls for much examination.

It will take history to adequately decide that through comparisons of the respective effects of Louis Farrakhan and Martin Luther King. Nevertheless, some outcomes of their individual activities are available, and those of King arguably tower above not just those of Farrakhan, but of most leaders of the world, throughout history.

Martin Luther King led a civil rights movement that has resulted in revolutionary changes in the state of African Americans equaling the changes in the state of blacks that followed the Civil War which freed the slaves. But beyond that, the movement King led has resulted in the "freeing" of all Americans, and indeed multitudes all over the planet, who have used King's philosophies and leadership example to extract themselves from long repression. King's years of leadership have resulted in notable changes in governmental and corporate approaches to the inclusion of black Americans in all aspects of the society.

The numbers and positions of blacks in economic, political, and educational positions of leadership have increased several times over, in the aftermath of King's leadership. Blacks who have had to cope with the repression and subordination of themselves in the years before the civil rights movement, recognize the great changes that have occurred (changes which are not dismissed by "know-nothing" rhetorical attempts to do so). The King-led civil rights victories have resulted in a changing of the face of the entire national political scene. White men, in backlash against the effectiveness of the civil rights movement, have moved over to the Republican Party after decades of voting for Democrats. And whites have refused to give the Democratic candidate for President the majority of their votes for more than 30 years.

In comparison, though the Million Man March gained the attention of the media for a few days, but since then it has been barely discernible as a national force having any notable effect on the way society functions. Perhaps the future will see such effects, but they are not seen now.

— William Simpson
Park Forest, Ill.

Muslims seek peace on earth

As this 'Holiday' season passed and the report from "Christmas in Bosnia" overwhelmed us through the media, one could easily forget that most of the people of Bosnia are Muslim.

The Christmas rituals that showered Bosnia were just another form of "ethnic cleansing" by NATO-led troops. Kinder and gentler as it may have seemed, this holiday is steeped in ancient paganism namely those who worship the son and not observed by Muslims who worship Allah (the one and only true God).

The Muslims of Bosnia did not need the distraction of Christmas, especially with the influence it may have had on the children. Giving Christmas toys to a child whose father has been murdered and mother and sister have been raped by Christian Serbs provided no healing. But give the child a gun and perhaps justice could start being served.

The UN and NATO alliance along with the Christian Serbs and Zionist counterparts does not want Islam in Europe, so this "crusade" continues on many levels. What the Muslims of Bosnia do need is the practice of their religion, Al-Islam (pure and uncut). This is the only thing that will give them "Peace on Earth."

— Jabril H. Hough
Charlotte

What's on your mind?

Send your comments to The Charlotte Post, P.O. Box 30144, Charlotte, N.C. 28230 or fax (704) 342-2160.

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