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## Accommodationism of Booker T. Washington sparked U.S. apartheid

By Ron Daniels  
SPECIAL TO THE POST

In 1895 at the Atlanta Cotton Exposition, one year before the historic Plessy vs. Ferguson Supreme Court decision, Booker T. Washington spoke before an influential gathering of agricultural, industrial, commercial and financial leaders and exhorted southern Blacks to "cast down your bucket where you are."

In this widely watched and noted speech, Mr. Washington went on to say, "In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet as one in all things essential to mutual progress...The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is extremist folly..."

The Atlanta Exposition speech marked the rise to ascendancy of Booker T. Washington as the pre-eminent leader in Black America. The speech also signaled an accommodation to the system of southern apartheid in the Post Reconstruction era in the South and decidedly played to the interests of the power elites in both the South and the North. Northern textile interests and southern agriculturalist had a vested interest in keeping the former slaves locked to the land in the South as sharecroppers, tenant farmers and agricultural laborers. The exploitation of quasi-slave labor meant large profits for the cotton industry in the South and the growing textile industry in the North. Northern industrial interests were also eager to avoid conflicts between a "black horde" from the South and the waves of white immigrants arriving from Europe taking jobs in the industrial/manufacturing sector. Hence, Washington's "cast down your buckets where you are" remark was designed to discourage blacks from leaving the South in search of the "promised land" in the North.

Washington's counsel to blacks in the South to avoid "agitation" over social and political questions was particularly comforting to the southern power structure which had broken the back of the populist revolt where white and black farmers and workers had united to threaten their rule. Washington thus emerged as a "trusted" figure who could be counted on to keep blacks in their place in terms of staying in the South and someone who would keep the peace on questions of social and political equality. As a consequence, the coffers of philanthropists in the North and South were opened to finance Tuskegee Institute and other projects promoted by Booker T. Washington. In addition, the major establishment media of the day also actively touted Mr. Washington as the kind of reasonable and responsible leader of the "colored" people that White America could do business with.

Mr. Washington was not without his detractors, however. Up and coming leaders like the young W.E.B. DuBois considered Washington an unadulterated "Uncle Tom." Mr. Washington was an accommodationist, but it is sometimes difficult to determine how much of what he articulated was a matter of true belief or simply feeding White folks what they wanted to hear to buy time for a beleaguered and underdeveloped Black community.

For example, Mr. Washington clearly believed that blacks in the South had made a big mistake by exercising political power without an economic base, or the education, skills and training to compete in the economy of the South. Hence, he was a staunch proponent of the values of hard work, thrift and self-reliance. He believed that through practicing the right values and acquiring skills through agricultural and vocational education, whites would eventually come to accept blacks as their equals. And, Tuskegee Institute, which Mr. Washington labored long and hard to build, was unquestionably a beacon of hope and promise for large numbers of blacks in the South.

Despite his "cast your buckets down where you are" doctrine, however, Mr. Washington is known to have secretly financed groups of blacks who wanted to leave the South to go North. And, in spite of his public admonition to blacks to avoid agitating around social and political equality, he also contributed funds to individuals and organizations mounting legal challenges to lynching and the disenfranchisement of blacks. The enigmatic Washington was not adverse to saying one thing in public and doing something completely different in private.

Whether wishful "Tom" or cunning tactician, the accommodationism of Booker T. Washington was inadequate to advance the interests of the sons and daughters of Africa within a hostile racist and exploitative society. It was not a matter of choosing between self help or agitation, but utilizing both self help and agitation. By emphasizing only one aspect of the struggle for liberation, Booker T. Washington was saddled with the label of Uncle Tom.

RON DANIELS writes from Elmsford, N.Y.

## Restoring fathers to families

By Michael Session  
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER  
PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

Recognizing the critical problem of "fatherlessness" in the nation, the Cleveland-based Institute Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization has created a remarkably successful approach, that brings young black American fathers back to their children and families. Over 2,500 fathers and their families have been served by the institute.

It is a non-profit organization created in 1982 from the vision of its founder and president, Charles A. Ballard. Ballard, in explaining why he started the institute, has spoken eloquently on the devastating effect a father's absence has on his family: "There is something missing in the lives of children who grow up without committed, caring fathers. The potential problems can follow a family for generations. The effects are especially hard on young males. Without that special dimension of guidance a father can give, these young men are at risk of becoming fathers too soon themselves.

The pressure of having to act responsibly without the proper understanding can be too much for them to handle. As a male who was separated from his father at three and became a father at 17, I can relate to this intimately."

The institute has developed a method that literally changes the lives of absent and non-attentive fathers. Its approach is based on modeling and interventions to encourage young fathers to achieve positive self-esteem. The institute's team interacts with fathers to create environments which allow them



FILE PHOTO

to develop thinking that produces an increased quality of life for their children.

Fathers being served by the institute often display high-risk behaviors, however, under the institute's counseling and guidance the father pursues a risk-free lifestyle. Each takes on the challenge of living in the absence of tobacco, alcohol, other drug abusive behavior, sex outside of marriage, obesity or other high-risk tendencies that plague black American communities. Fathers receive intense non-traditional one-on-one support, group support, family outreach, fathering skills, health and nutrition information, medical and housing referrals, as well as educational and career guidance. Most services are provided in the home of the father, permitting his issues to be managed at the core, which establishes quality at the source.

Despite its unorthodox approach, a 1993 reactive evaluation of the Cleveland program and services, conducted

by Drs. G. Regina Nixon and Anthony E.O. King of Case Western Reserve University, documented the positive impact the institute has had on its participants.

Findings included:

- 97 percent spend more time with their children and are providing financial support.
- 96 percent experienced an improved relationship with the child's mother.
- 92 percent developed positive values and attitudes.
- 70 percent of fathers completed 12 years of education; nearly 12 percent at least one year of college.
- 62 percent are employed full time; 11 percent are employed part-time.

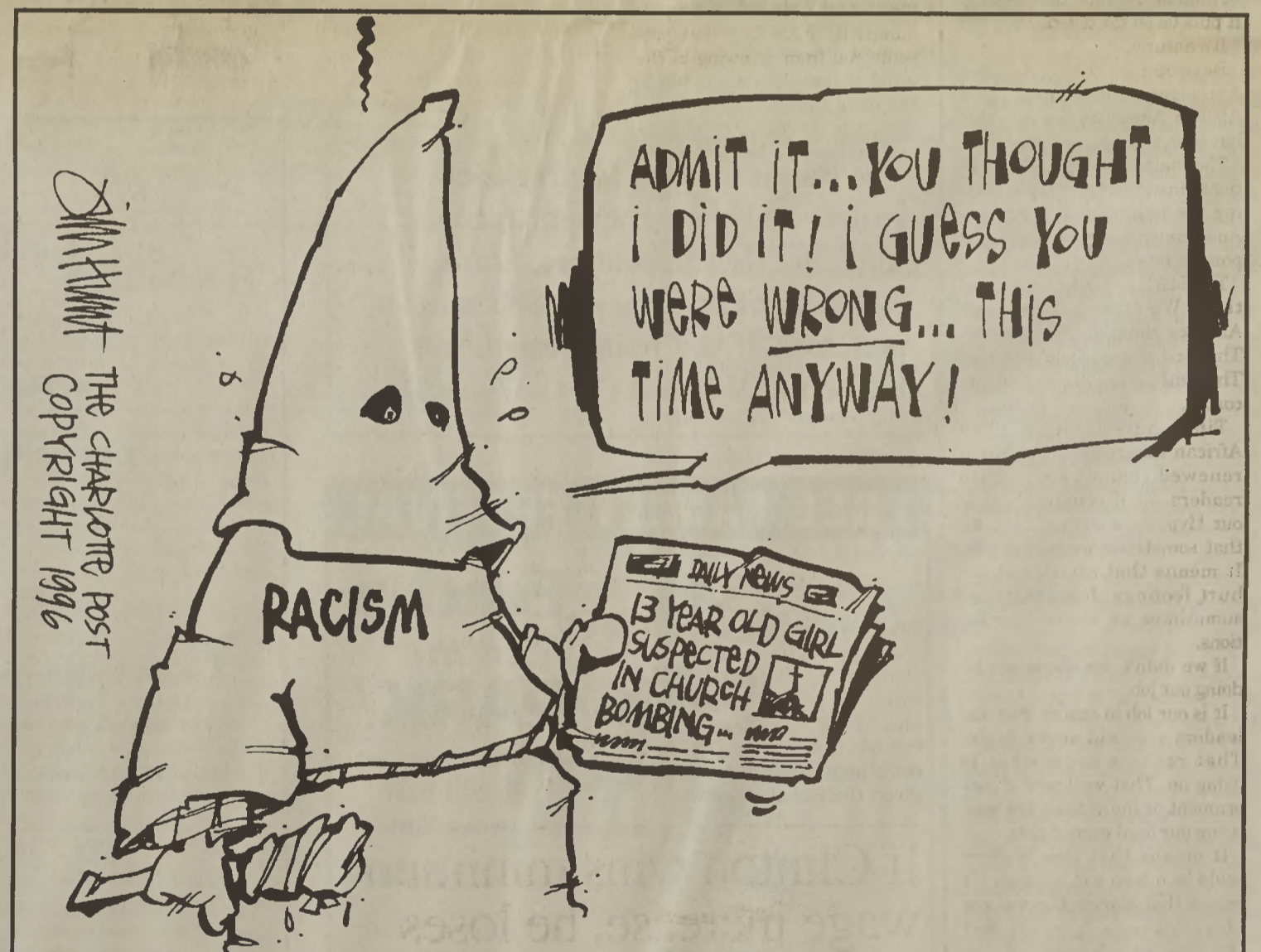
Since institute outreach specialists lead by example, modeling rather than demanding change, they are able to help bring about a change in the attitude of the father. Moreover, enough cannot be said about the fact that the institute does not undermine the traditional two-parent family as past programs have. In fact, the institute is

helping restore the two-parent family.

During the course of the past two years, letters and calls from more than 60 cities and seven countries, including Japan and some in Africa, have requested that the service be expanded to their locations. Based on a thorough evaluation of the requests, and with encouragement from both local and national opinion leaders, foundations and corporations, the institute is now beginning national expansion to five additional cities: Atlanta, Milwaukee, Nashville, San Diego, and Yonkers.

In the targeted areas for each site, the institute will go door-to-door to over 15,000 households. During that period of time, 1,000 fathers will establish paternity and some 300 will receive intensive services. The Institute For Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization is paving the way for a better America.

MICHAEL SESSION is a National Newspaper Publishers Association columnist.



## African American male image takes a beating at hands of women

By Eric H. Kearney  
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER  
PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

As an African American man, I have to admit I still feel bruised by Alice Walker's novel and movie, "The Color Purple." That's why I have not rushed out to see (or read or rent) Terry McMillan's "Waiting To Exhale." I've heard my wife, my mother, my female cousins, and a bevy of black women rejoice over its independent African American women characters.

With that I detected, or better anticipated, that the book and movie liberate African American women at the

expense of African American men. This impression, which is admittedly ill-informed and tenuously provided, was confirmed during my voyage on the Internet's Net Noir. From what I can tell Net Noir is the "cyberhood," an African American section of the Internet where many blacks chat about issues.

On my first visit to NetNoir (and my first surf on the Internet since graduating from college), many of the women found that the movie accurately portrayed the sad state of affairs between African American women and men. African American men were described as uninterested in commitment and dishonest once

in a relationship.

The conversation on the Internet branched out from the movie to relationships in general. It devolved into those endless talks about relations without getting to conclusions, or the point. Caustic criticism of African American men led to more stories of how bad African-American men are. I felt trapped between the scented pages of Essence magazine and the African-American women's conference scene in "Jungle Fever."

Then the conversation turned as it inevitably does to the "threat:" African American women stated that since there are no acceptable African-

American men, they were turning to other races for romance. One even stated that African American women can live without African American men, but African-American men cannot live without African American women. It seems in truth, that either gender can do without the other and many choose just that. Interracial couples seem well-accepted. The dating game is an open market; people are free to choose. But the comments carry a deeper pain. They show that African American women, whether justified or not, felt African American men have mistreated them. They show that African American women feel African American men find

"hanging with the fellas" more rewarding than being with African American women. Still further, their comments imply that they feel African American men are immature. Picking at a sore only makes it worse. Hearing these specious charges only makes me more reluctant to see another movie or read another book by an African-American female author.

As an African American man, I grow tired of being subjected to criticism from society and then hearing it from my African American peers. My personal experience has been that African American men, like most men, are reluctant to enter into relationships. On the other

hand, African American women are untrusting and expect seemingly instantaneous commitment.

Moving beyond the hurting and inaccurate generalizations, African American women and African American men are individuals and should be received and graded as such.

ERIC H. KEARNEY is a Cincinnati attorney. He is the publisher of NIP Magazine, an African American News/Feature magazine distributed in Cincinnati, Columbus, Dayton, Indianapolis, Lexington, and Louisville. Send your comments to: P.O. BOX 1691, Cincinnati, OH 45201.