

# Sport, reality collide

MELODY MICERE STEWART

In the spirit of Ma'at



Sports culture, particularly the almighty basketball, has captured the imagination and all too often, the intellect of black youth. Even mature black men, fighting the onset of arthritis and brittle bones, make their way to the hoop, slower than in younger days, and even slower to admit it.

Young men, whose muscle and energy oozes in sweaty t-shirts supplied by well-developed legs and arms, could use that same brawn and energy to develop entrepreneurial enterprises versus a mean jump shot. Brain power versus dunk power.

Athletic shoes, necessary equipment for swerves, curves, jump shots and the run, siphon off hand-earned dollars by the millions. The money-making media illusion is captured best by commercials featuring Nike's Air Jordan. Of course, Michael himself has become a modern day sales whore, selling everything from sneakers and clothes to advanced technology, with cologne on the side and a dime or two for charity.

Pitiful. An entire park in Charlotte is devoted to the sport: rows and rows of courts and hoops and no shortage of would-be, wanna-be, NBA dreamers, giving their best shot and energy to a pursuit doubtful to earn a bottom line. Energy better used studying, reading, writing.

Don't get me wrong - sports has its place. However, our youth, with encouragement from parents, peers, schools, television, corporate moguls and jaded dreams, have elevated the game beyond its place and to the brain-drain detriment of our race. Sports will never return to its proper place as long as millions of dollars are generated for team owners, sneaker purveyors and an eager black public, looking for heroes who dubiously disclaim role model status. The modern day auction block is celebrated in every sports arena as players sell themselves to the highest bidder. (And now we have the WNBA...)

Meanwhile, if African Americans would realize the larger picture, we would understand that athletes and entertainers form the base of our economic power and could underwrite a path to black self-sufficiency and well-being. But (for the most part) African American athletes, entertainers, professionals and just plain everyday folk are asleep, unconscious to 400 years of American enslavement indoctrination - the contemporary version being individualism and materialism - blinding us to a potential nation-changing reality. And how does this affect the future potential of Black America?

When's the last time you heard an African American teenager brag about slambunking an algebra test or a biology quiz? When's the last time you heard a young boy dreaming about an MBA, a far more attainable and realistic goal than the NBA? In my youth workshops on goals, when young men tell me their "goal" is to play sports, I tell them they need a "plan B". The likelihood of your average player making it big is close to none.

When I see 16 year-old would-be accountants, lawyers, teachers, computer programmers, etc, whose only dream is to play basketball in the NBA, I know that far too many of them will "Never Be Accomplished" in the game of life.

# Home ownership grows in U.S.

Continued from page 1A

working hard to pay off all of our bills," Sherry Thomas said. "That's how we were able to get a house. We wanted to make sure we got out there and got our piece of the rock. It's a good investment and we have a home for our son."

Coldwell Banker real estate agent Roland Hawkins, who helped the Thomases find their home, sees the trend first-hand. About 60 percent of his customers are African American, but the numbers are still too low.

Unlike the Thomases, too often, "African Americans have not envisioned themselves as homeowners," Hawkins said.

Upward mobility in the workforce and the existence of a variety of government and private financing options make homeownership a closer reality than many blacks think, he said.

Housing researchers and politicians say the trend is a bright spot in an encouraging assessment of the nation's housing industry in a report released Monday by Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies.

"What many forecasters have failed to recognize is the emergence of this important minority home-buying market," said William Appgar, the center's executive director.

Housing Secretary Andrew Cuomo called the findings "very good news for America and great news for American families."

"But, as we continue to open the doors of opportunity for more Americans, we recognize that barriers of discrimination remain

## Minorities 30 percent of total

and they must be knocked down," he said.

Hawkins said some of the factors which also keep blacks from buying homes are that homeownership is not always a high priority and issues such as poor credit histories.

He said family incomes of \$50,000-\$60,000 can find good buys in the Charlotte market.

On the other end of the scale, according to the Harvard report, as government restructures welfare and housing assistance programs, conditions are worsening for low-income families.

Drawn by their search for better-quality schools and services, city residents continue to migrate to the suburbs, leaving behind low-income renters who cannot afford to buy a home, according to the study, released Monday.

About 72 percent of suburban families own their own homes, while only 49 percent of city homes are owned by the people who live in them. Many of those suburban families are African American, like the Thomases, who sought a newly-constructed home after being unable to find what they wanted in a previously-owned house.

The study warns that cutbacks in federal housing assistance could prompt owners of subsidized housing - including housing agencies - to sell their properties. It also stresses the importance of programs that help former welfare recipients who are now work-

ing to pay rent.

"Millions of low-income households rely on public assistance to pay for their housing," said Josephine Louie, an analyst at the Joint Center. "What we've discovered is that many landlords - especially those owning a handful of units - have limited capacity to compensate for the loss of income they would suffer by continuing to rent these households."

Overall, the housing economy is far better than economic forecasters expected, with 3.4 million new homeowners in the past three years - pushing the national homeownership rate to a near-peak level of 65.4 percent of households.

"With sales of new and existing homes still going strong, the 1990s is shaping up as one of the best decades for housing on record," the study states.

A breakdown by race of homeownership growth shows that Hispanics have made the greatest gains between 1993 and 1996, buying 460,000 new homes for a total increase of 16 percent.

Blacks bought 350,000 new homes for a gain of 7.5 percent, while a demographic group including Asians, American Indians and Pacific Islanders bought 182,000 for a growth of 11.8 percent.

By comparison, whites bought 2.4 million homes for a gain of 4.5 percent.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

# Women march organizers forge ahead

By Penni Roberts  
THE PHILADELPHIA TRIBUNE

PHILADELPHIA - Although The Million Woman March has received unfavorable press recently for being too vague and unorganized, officials say things are going as planned for the scheduled rally on Oct. 25.

At a press conference recently Asia Coney, a co-chair of the March, announced that Winnie Mandela and Julia Wright, daughter of Harlem Renaissance author Richard Wright, will be participating in the event. But Coney said organizers are not focusing on celebrities to draw the big gathering they anticipate.

"It doesn't matter whether we are national figures," she said. "It matters that we are together."

As part of their mission statement, organizers said they wanted to focus on issues that have adversely affected the black community.

"The Million Women March provides us the opportunity to prioritize the human and environmental issues. It will collectively enable us to develop an assertive and aggressive movement to ensure the participation and impact of people of African descent," organizers noted in a statement.

They also unveiled the platform issues that some had contended were non-existent.

Issues include:

- National support for Congresswoman Maxine Waters, in an effort to effectively bring about a probe into the CIA's participation and its relationship to

the influx of drugs into the African American community.

- The development and completion of black independent schools with a 21st century focus from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade.

• The formation of progressive mechanisms that will qualitatively address the development and advancement of black women upon leaving the penal system.

• The development of health facilities that can offer preventive and therapeutic treatment, and a major emphasis on alternative and traditional medicine.

• The formation of Rites of Passage centers/academics which provide continual programming in addition to assigned enrollment periods.

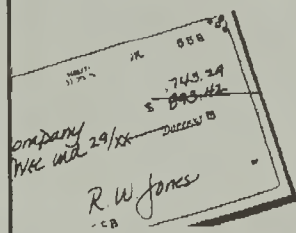
• The further development of black women, who are or who wish to become professionals, entrepreneurs and/or politicians.

• The further development of mechanisms that will assist black women who are "in transitional" experiences which will facilitate them more effectively and progressively.

• The examination of human rights violations of Africans in the Americas and their effects.

Coney said another primary reason for holding the march was to address the issues women are facing in prison and other related issues as well.

"There needs to be a mechanism in place that will support them (women in prison) and ensure that they do not repeat the same mistakes again," Coney said, adding that the declining housing



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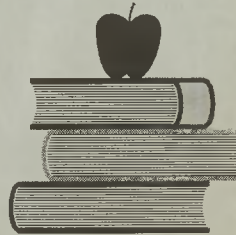
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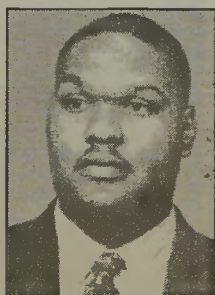
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