

EDITORIALS

ON YOUR MARK....



Black History Month: Time to Help

BY WALTER E. FAUNTROY
Guest Editorial

As we celebrate Black History Month, 1992, and honor the experience and achievements of black people in America, let us include in our celebrations homage to the experiences and achievements of blacks in Africa and elsewhere in the diaspora. Let us include in our program for progress, increased assistance for blacks in South Africa, elsewhere on the continent and in the diaspora.

For example, we cannot let the month of February pass without celebrating the dramatic release of Nelson Mandela from prison, two years ago, Feb. 11, 1990, after 27 years of confinement in South Africa for his uncompromising resistance to apartheid. The streets of American cities were flooded with those who shared in the ecstasy of black South Africans who pledged their continued support to end apartheid and its tentacles.

Mandela reminds us in a recent letter which he sent to Congressman Dymally (D-Calif., chairman of the House Subcommittee on Africa) in honor of Black History Month, that the struggle against apartheid is not yet over, and even when it is over, the struggle against the deprivations and inequities which are the legacy of apartheid will necessarily continue for many years. For example, the lives of millions of black South Africans hang in the balance as a result of wretched and pervasive poverty occasioned by the immoral South African system of apartheid. As a result of this racially oppressive system, 81 percent of black South Africans who live in the homelands live in abject poverty, with no electricity, no plumbing, no tap water, diseased and malnourished.

In Mandela's letter to Rep. Dymally, he cites some additional horrifying statistics about the plight of black South Africans: that median schooling for whites

is 9.2 years but for blacks is only two years; that there is one doctor for every 400 whites but only one doctor for every 90,000 blacks; that average monthly income for whites is \$950 but for blacks only \$190; that there is an immediate need for two million homes to house those who must now live in cardboard shacks or worse.

In response to an appeal by President Mandela for immediate emergency humanitarian assistance for the black South Africans who are hungry, homeless and in dire need of health supplies, friends of Mandela recently arranged for the installation of a "900" number through which persons may easily make a concrete demonstration of their appreciation for Mandela's work and of their support for the long-suffering black people of South Africa.

A call to 1-900-230-8880 provides the caller an opportunity to hear a pre-recorded message of thanks from Nelson Mandela and triggers a contribution to the Mandela Freedom Fund. The call costs \$5.95 and is authorized only for persons over the age of 18 years. The Mandela Freedom Fund is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization which funds worthwhile relief and development projects in a broad range of black communities in South Africa.

Sharing our meager resources with our South African brothers and sisters is both noble and practical. Most of the people reading this news story are probably substantially better off than the average South African black (remember, median schooling, 2 years; average monthly income, \$190).

Because South African blacks are currently in the midst of a major assault on the apartheid system, each dollar received now may well be worth much more to them than the same sum sent a year from now. Assisting South Africans is a splendid way to celebrate black History Month 1992.

Environmental Emergency

Based on the most informed scientific opinion, unless far-reaching measures are taken soon to curb the release of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, irreversible threats to all humankind and the natural environment will be inevitable. The National Academy of Sciences points out that the long-term consequences of global climate warming and damage to the ozone could be severe.

Present evidence indicates that human activities almost exclusively account for the amplification of the Earth's natural greenhouse effect.

This warming is leading to higher temperatures worldwide, rising sea levels threatening coastal cities everywhere,

changes in rainfall patterns, more frequent and intense tropical storms, more severe droughts, reduced agricultural output, the destruction of coastal wetlands and the loss of many unmanaged ecosystems.

Two evaluations remain: nature could be warning us that we are the culprits and must stop the amplification of the Earth's greenhouse effect, or it is a natural progression and there is nothing we can do about it.

For the most part, the United States, Japan and western Europe must aggressively reduce their carbon dioxide emissions through fuel efficiency in buildings, industry and transportation.

OPINION

Dems should ask, 'Where's Cuomo?'

By Chuck Stone

Coming out of the New Hampshire primary and the Iowa caucuses, the Democratic Party seems hellbent on perpetuating Mr. Dooley's mournful assessment: "Th' Dimmycratic Party ain't on speakin' terms with itself."

Iowa native son Tom Harkin, the only avowed liberal presidential hopeful, walked off with the Iowa Democratic delegates, while the New Hampshire campaign left all Democrats salivating for an electable candidate.

All candidates are electable. Some are simply more electable than others.

Despite the New Hampshire outcome, two political facts of life are irrefutable: Bill Clinton's candidacy is a fatality waiting to happen, and the candidacy of Paul Tsongas is a happening waiting to fail.

I will confess, however, that the charismatic and solar-bright intellect of Clinton initially fascinated me.

With the collapse of his candidacy, Democrats desperately need a massive blood transfusion of credibility, beginning with their national party chairman, Ron Brown. The natty, oleaginous Brown inspires as much confidence in the party's fortunes as Little Orphan Annie reciting the Declaration of Independence outdoors in zero-degree weather at midnight.

The Democrats must also eventually master the art of nominating electable candidates. All candidates are electable. Some are more electable than others. And that electability is based on perception.

Current polls favor incumbent President Bush over all Democrats. Given that scenario, the Democrats should be working overtime for the most electable Democrat: Mario Cuomo.

When the New York governor disavows any interest in a presidential race, he is sincere. But recently, the statesmanship of his speech at Harvard revived a moribund national party.

Three questions must be asked:

• Can Cuomo win? Of course, he can.

Experienced as head of the Empire state, unapologetically liberal and ennobled with one of the most incisive minds in politics today, Cuomo brings class to the presidential dialogue.

And he writes and speaks with an inspiring authority. His Jan. 2, 1983, inaugural address ranks with Lincoln's and Kennedy's inaugural addresses as three of the most eloquent statements of what America is and can become.

• Can Cuomo bring back to the Democratic Party the Southern white males who have defected disproportionately more than any other groups?

That was Clinton's strongest suit as a Southerner. But the answer for Cuomo depends on how long the South can tolerate the economic pain of Bush's decimation of middle-class families.

• Can an Italian-American win in the South in 1992?

"His being Italian is not a problem," a distinguished publisher of one of the South's most influential newspapers laughingly replies. "But a

YANKEE Italian?"

But Southerners, like Northerners and Westerners, will join forces if they collectively decide that the Bush administration cares more about the stabilization of foreign nations than the destabilization of domestic families.

All of the candidates have rediscovered the middle class. Sometimes, it seems as if "middle class" is a code word for excluding the unemployed, the poor and minorities from the political dialogue.

Still, the 89 percent of black families who earn \$15,000 or more just as proudly envision themselves as middle-class as the 89 percent white families in that economic range. When it comes to aspirations for a better life for their families, a good education for their children and domestic tranquility in their neighborhoods, all Americans are united as a middle-class nation.

Bush has spent his presidential first term playing Lemuel Gulliver abroad and Rip Van Winkle at home.

This nation needs a great man in the White House. "Great deeds are wrought at great risks," observed Herodotus.

Mario Cuomo offers America an opportunity to do both.

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CHUCK STONE

ERNIES WORLD

BY ERNIE JOHNSTON, JR.

YOUNG FILMMAKERS MISSING THE MARK

I hadn't seen the movie, *Straight Out of Brooklyn*, when it was playing on the big screen so I did like I do most movies, wait until they come out on video so I can view them in the privacy of my own environment.

After watching the movie, I could see why it stayed in the movie houses for a short period of time. It didn't grab the attention of a wide audience.

Filmmaker Matty Rich made a big and bold attempt to put together a movie, getting funds from family and other sources. However, there are some ingredients missing and it can be traced to what most young filmmakers lack, experience and not living in a world other than drugs, crime and violence.

Almost every film that I have seen lately that has been done by young African-American filmmakers is punctuated with heavy profanity, men are shown either as no-good husbands or sitting around with no real worthwhile jobs.

In the case of *Straight Out of Brooklyn*, there is a heavy amount of abuse against the woman by her husband, a group of youngsters get a gun from a gun dealer and rob a drug dealer and there is hardly anything positive shown in the movie that a young black can stand up and cheer about.

Although there is a message in the film, I am not too sure that what young Rich did can cater to the masses of the people.

Rich is not alone as the list is long, *Boys N the Hood*, *Juice* and *New Jack City* all having either a drug or violence plot. But then again, this is the world where the Richs, Singletons and Dickersons are coming from.

Thank God that Spike Lee is coming of age and is

making movies that can be seen by all groups and all ages.

What these young filmmakers need to do is get seasoned actors and actresses to serve as consultants or advisors as they put together scripts and film their movies.

In this day and time when we sit before the big screen, we need to see African-Americans in a positive light—black folks who have acquired something and have gone on to improve the quality of life around them.

Not portraying African-Americans in positive ways dates back to the time when black actors and actresses were only given parts as maids and butlers.

In the '90s we have vice presidents of companies, owners of big businesses, students who are excelling in high school and college and black folks who are trying to eradicate drugs from their communities.

We don't need to see drug dealers killing people, husbands beating their wives and gangs roaming the streets.

Young filmmakers have a golden opportunity—to put on that screen something positive as it pertains to black folks. We need to see the black man or the black woman taking over a multimillion-dollar company or the African-American sitting in the head corporate chair being chauffeured around in a limo or Rolls-Royce. And we need the comedies which are always good clean fun. So why not a good black comedy?

Since movies are basically fiction, why not give the young black boy or girl something that they can strive for? Even though it's a dream in the movie, it can become a reality if they study and work hard enough for it.

Showing a life of drugs and violence in the community is no way to motivate young people and it's a turnoff for other folks.

Miller Says

BY SHERMAN N. MILLER
IS AMERICA A CRUEL AND ROWDY NATION?

Presidential election years are more fun than a barrel of monkeys. Politicians take great pride in inundating the American people with hollow promises without fearing accountability for their lies.

It is easy merely to accept these prevarications as politics as usual, but these are trying times that demand that the American people start holding politicians' feet to the fire. Consider President George Bush's 1992 State of the Union address and the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Tom Foley's, Democratic response to it. I have not heard anyone tell me that they got a warm feeling from these talks.

If one ignores the rhetoric and seeks the underpinning cause of the present economic crisis, one quickly concludes that the present politicians' finger-pointing exercises are mere tomfoolery. America's predicament comes from an ignored presidential vision and the U.S. Congress' inability to understand the importance of a vision.

Earlier in the 20th century, world figures (famous and infamous) possessed a vision they articulated to the masses. President Franklin D. Roosevelt believed that government could help the little man during the great depression.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. visualized a nation where people are judged by their character and not race. Mohandas K. Gandhi envisioned a free and independent India. Sir Winston Churchill refused to give up the face of overwhelming odds. Finally, Adolf Hitler brought world domination by the German people.



MILLER

The real tragedy is that President George Bush had a great vision, "a kinder and gentler nation," that he abandoned. President Bush let the high visibility associated with foreign policy successes enchant him into committing the ultimate sin of a leader. He put his followers on a fast track to nowhere because he failed to fully paint a picture of what tomorrow should be.

Chairmen of the board of multinational corporations can attest that the lack of a vision will lead to your corporation's demise. The vision statement is the most important element in a business plan because once everyone buys into it then they will develop the specific plans necessary to reach this goal.

President Bush now suffers from failed leadership vision syndrome. This is apparent in the ever-increasing employment lines, the swell of homeless people, the re-emergence of the soup kitchens, health care evolving beyond the providence of the poor, bank failures rivaling the gross national product of many nations, and so on.

These miseries say that the United States of America is a "cruel and rowdy" nation. They also say that America needs a presidential candidate who can separate a vision statement from political rhetoric.

Bush can generate good vision statements. Therefore, I ask, "Will he convince the American people he can offer the leadership necessary to make his dreams come true?" Or perhaps a Democratic presidential candidate will upstage Bush and convince the American people that he can exploit the original Bush vision to rekindle American prosperity.