

EDITORIALS

The Underclass

The plight of the African-American male continues to grow, bringing a greater threat of diversity to unity within the black race and the ultimate survival of this passage.

Presently we are observing what some analysts attempt to define as an "underclass" with blacks leading as the subject of family and community instability, resulting in joblessness, homelessness and children, women and the elderly receiving public assistance.

The truly disadvantaged include both white Americans and members of other minority groups in cities and rural areas where high concentrations of poverty exist. But we are chiefly concerned here with the African-American males who have become isolated.

The chasm of alienation will widen unchecked until the African-American community combines forces to help eliminate

poverty, racial isolation, crime, illiteracy, drugs, family instability and unwanted teenage pregnancy. But first we must accept this as a real threat to our unity and existence.

African-American parents and leaders must articulate a new vision for black males out of the hope that has remained through other times of near despair. This vision must demand and reinforce a reclamation of the black male, with new sacrifices, energies, directions and the translation of these into the practicalities of teaching and overcoming oppression.

African-Americans understood achieving political rights a generation ago through dedication and sacrifice. That was one phase of the battle. The oncoming phase is to save the youth and victory in this struggle is by no means assured unless we take a new direction.

Environmental Racism

One of the most eloquent statements on the environment was given in 1854 by Chief Seattle of the Suquamish at the time that the United States government purchased "his people's land" in the Washington Territory.

"The Earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the Earth," said Chief Seattle to President Pierce in a heartfelt speech that addressed the environment and the underlying premise of the Anglo-American legal system today.

"This shining water that moves in the streams and rivers is not just water but the blood of our ancestors. If we sell you land, you must remember that it is sacred, and you must teach your children that it is sacred, and that each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes tells of the events and memories in the life of my people. The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father. The rivers are our brothers, they quench our thirst."

Like the long list of broken treaties, this environmental plea has not been honored and today, garbage dumps, hazardous waste sites, incinerators, industrial plants are part of the landscape while pollution flows into oceans, rivers and streams, destroying marine life.

Those facilities, which were regarded until recent years as unattractive but necessary fixtures of modern life, emit and expel contaminants that harm both the natural environment and the health of human beings. The adverse effects of such facilities, though difficult to trace, are significant, long-term and may not be reversible.

It has surfaced that some of us are more at risk of exposure to environmental pollutants than others, depending on skin color and the size of bank accounts. Why? Because American cities and towns are pervasively segregated along racial and socio-economic lines, and facilities that pollute are not equally distributed throughout all inhabited areas.

Rather, they are concentrated in low-income, minority communities—deliberately, it seems, not by coincidence. That's the same unequal treatment of people we observe in other aspects of American life. That's environmental racism.

John A. Powell, national legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union, has reported that minorities in the inner cities or on Native American reservations often do not resist—and sometimes even welcome—the location of, say, an incinerator in their neighborhoods, looking to such facilities for economic salvation.

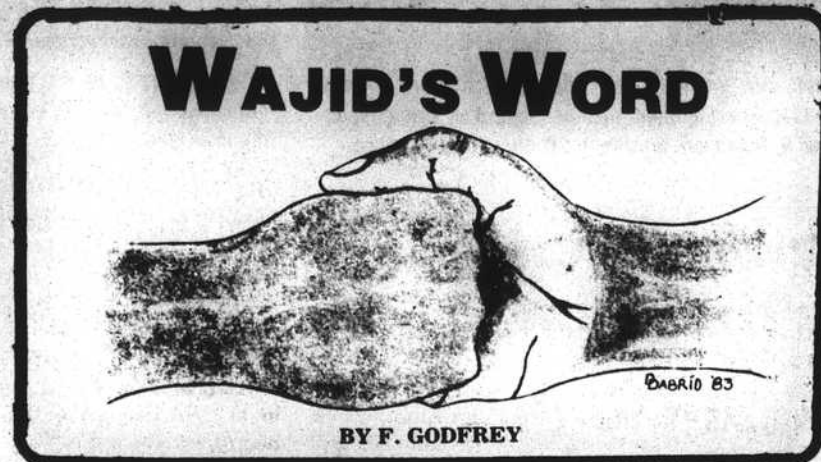
But although the incinerator may bring some jobs, they are usually only a few of the lowest-paying jobs—hardly enough to "save" the community. Moreover, property values go down where an incinerator has been located, and those who can afford to do so, move away, further reducing the area's tax base and further depressing the community.

Language barriers, in some cases, along with the lack of information about health risks posed by waste disposal or industrial facilities, are other factors that prevent the poor from protesting against the placement of hazardous facilities in their midst.

And even when poor and minority people are aware that health problems are associated with living near sources of pollution, they simply do not have the political power to fend off the proposed facility. The affluent and politically empowered, on the other hand, can keep hazardous facilities out of their neighborhoods.

The first civil rights lawsuit involving environmental issues was filed last year. It seeks to prevent the construction of a toxic waste incinerator in a mostly low-income, Hispanic immigrant community in Kettleman City, Calif. The suit charges that local residents were excluded from the decision-making process in violation of state environmental and civil rights laws.

Environmental racism is hazardous to your health. Be aware.



One of the things I am sure most parents attempt to do at least on a regular basis, is to instill in their children a sense of self-pride and respect for other people, regardless of their race, religion or lifestyle. However, it is extremely difficult to convince our children of the importance or likelihood of others relating to them based on the same premise. For example, I would say that most, if not all, black people in America experience some type of overt racism every day. Our children experience it as students in the classrooms of the Public System of Miseducation where the racist notions of the oppressor were shaped long before they are encountered in the classroom.

We experience it every time we leave our neighborhoods and go to the various malls and business establishments. We feel the way the security guards "watch" us. We experience being treated less kind than white customers in many instances. We recall being in line before some white person in a retail store and being served after them. We are aware that our change is sometimes put on the counter or dropped in our hands as opposed to being placed in our hands courteously.

Our children feel the stares when they go to the public pools in North Raleigh. They are aware that when they go into the water that some whites leave the area. Our children know that sometimes they have to miss out on opportunities to be in talent shows, play sports, or participate in other school activities, as participation is not always based on ability. Our children are taught that society judges them on their ability and left to question that philosophy as they sit on the bench and watch some mediocre white kid play.

Our children know that they are more likely to be severely punished by school officials than their white counterparts. They know that most of the people in "chill out" (in-school detention) look like they do. They know that their parents for the most part make less than their white counterparts for the same effort.

Our recent college graduates realize that in spite of their high GPAs, perfect attendance and their "doing the right thing," many of them will not find opportunities in their disciplines. Many of them know that they have been put on graduate schools' waiting lists because they attended a black college. Those who do get jobs realize that they must work twice as hard as their white counterparts and may still earn less.

I could continue to give examples, but I am sure that most of you will agree that things have not really changed; in fact, they may have even gotten worse, and will continue to worsen unless and until we as a people begin to channel all of our energies into turning our condition around. Over the next few weeks I will attempt to outline some things which I feel are basic to our survival as a people. We cannot afford to wait on the government to legislate us into power. Power must be seized.

In closing I will remind you that we as a people control more than \$300 billion annually. We also represent one of the 10 largest black populations among all countries. We are a very powerful people and we always have been. It is time for us to use that power in improving our own condition. It can be done and it must be done! Peace!

Different Voice

BY DOROTHY SHAW-THOMPSON

WHEN SPIRIT SPEAKS

This article is about eight months in the making except that I didn't listen. When Spirit speaks to me in circumstances from a person or from a book I've read, when I don't answer it gets louder.

I'm answering this time, Spirit, no more lessons necessary. May 15 was a special day for me. I got a chance to go to a wedding that I looked forward to. Excuse me, folks that love weddings. I frankly don't usually look forward to them. From my perception, too much money has been spent for a couple to begin their lives together this way. Too few words are said for one of the most important commitments a person has to make. Words that too often are not really understood, or not truly heartfelt and who really speaks from the soul words someone else has you to repeat? Let's face it, who is going to stand before God and witness and say, "I don't" or "I want to spend my life with you but... for better or worse???" Come on, now." (Smile).

May 15 became for me, a challenge, an opportunity and a blessing. I journeyed to Durham to attend the wedding of a friend, Czerny Braswell, and Bujaro, who I had not met. The invitation promised the blending of the cultures of Africa, Brazil and America. I had painted the wedding dolls for the cake and knew that for the couple the colors white, gold and red were special and so I chose not to wear African but rather a white rayon knee-length dress suit with metallic gold accessories. Ladies, I was sharp (smile). As I entered the vestibule of the church, I noted a heated discussion between three gentlemen. One turned, pointing at me, and said with hostility, "And she can't come in either."

"Sir," said I. "Are you saying that I can't go in? May I ask why?" He bent slightly, touching the bottom of my suit, and asked, "What are those you have on?" "Pants," I replied. "It's the pants... You don't want me in your church with them on." Surprisingly, as I look back on it, it really was

okay. I had been thoughtless, it had not hit me that I wouldn't be able to wear what I had on in... and it was okay. Brad could go in and report back I wouldn't miss it... he could be my eyes.

The challenge: "It might not be no wedding," he said. The minister strutted off in a huff. Then it hit me. I had been baptized at five years old, studied the Bible... listen to God every day and had been disallowed entrance to His house by a man, not because of my behavior, nor something he knew about me, but rather because of what I had on!

The opportunity: I am a Christian. I could not walk away and say nothing... this man is my brother, minister though he may be... he was wrong... sincere, yes, but sincerely wrong. I went to him and introduced myself—my real self. He asked me what denomination I was. I told him. "I see," he said. "Well, we are disciples of Christ." I said, "Do you mean to say followers of Christ?" He said, "Miss, we don't let women in our church with pants on and with nothing on their heads. Another woman came to our church with pants on once... I stopped my sermon and told her to leave."

"Sir," I said. "Do you believe that that is what Christ would do?" He didn't answer. I continued, "Sir, I would never again come to your church with pants on because I can see it offends you and my intentions are not to offend but I must say that we see the place differently. You see it as your church. I see it as God's house and I know Him, and He knows me and based on that knowledge, He would let me in."

"Maybe so," he said. "But I have to protect my church from idol worshippers. They intend to worship idols in there." I later learned that he referred to an African wedding sculpture that, instead of flowers and candles, was a part of the decoration. Later, I had another opportunity to talk with him and share that the

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BIBLE THOUGHT

A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold. The rich and the poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all. A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished. By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honor, and life. Proverbs 22:1-4

TONY BROWN'S JOURNAL

WANTED: A FEW GOOD LEADERS WITH IDEAS

Jesse Jackson's latest political act is to demand that the Democratic Party adopt a platform that is so liberal that it would doom Bill Clinton's chances of winning because it would cost him the suburban vote.

For the first time, suburbanites are a majority of the voters. In 1968, it was a bloc that formed the core of the white backlash against ghetto rioting that elected Richard Nixon.

In 1992, not only are these whites as anti-inner-city as in 1968, they are poorer and in no mood to share money with the city-black poor.

Furthermore, any politician who suggests that money be transferred from white suburbanites to the urban cities, as Gov. Jim Florio did in New Jersey, will be punished at the polls.

Jackson's 1960's brand of leadership misses an essential reality of the '90s: the suburbs control the nation's political destiny. And as always, money follows power.

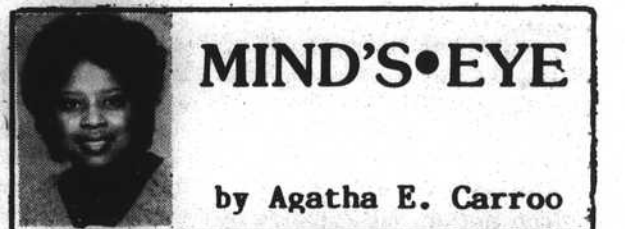
So how does Jesse Jackson think he can persuade the probable Democratic presidential candidate, Bill Clinton, and his party's leadership to commit political suicide by endorsing his agenda of outdated liberalism: more unionism (something Clinton has fought for years in Arkansas), more massive social programs that have already cost the Democrats the White House and opposition to the death penalty?

Besides, with Clinton's record of executions, and he certainly does not discriminate against the blacks he allows to die, he would be a blatant hypocrite to oppose

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BROWN



MIND'S EYE

By Agatha E. Carroo

A recent "Donahue" show brought the Mike Tyson fiasco full circle. Bill Cosby's daughter, Erinn Cosby, spoke freely about an episode with Mike Tyson in which he attempted to rape her. This incident occurred before the Desiree Washington rape. The entire sordid episode with Ms. Cosby was hushed and her famous dad apparently took care of everything. He supposedly, through his attorneys, strongly suggested to Tyson and his attorneys and entourage that Mike Tyson spend a year in counseling. Mike did not follow through and he continued to be a walking time bomb. Tyson is now incarcerated in a correctional facility designed to punish and not to rehabilitate. The treatment he obviously so badly needs will continue to elude him. Upon his re-entry to society, he will probably engage in the same sexually brutal behavior.

In continuing to analyze the Tyson case, it is obviously more complex than some commentators and some of the public first thought. It is not a case of a black man being "railroaded" by a racist criminal justice system. The system actually worked this time.

In this instance, it would behoove all of us to examine some of the themes and processes that the Tyson cases raises. First, African-American athletes who achieve money and fame through cunning and brute strength, rather than education, are easy prey for greedy, unscrupulous managers, attorneys, accountants and others. Instead of suggesting continued education and training for someone like Tyson, he is prompted to make speeches to our youth about staying in school. Thus, he continues to work with his basic instincts and his so-called managers and supporters "rob him blind."

A second unsettling theme points out the lack of outrage and disinterest of some members of the African-American community when the victim at the hands of a black male athlete is a black woman. The list of known victims of Tyson include beautiful black women: Robin Givens, Erinn Cosby, and Desiree Washington. There must have been a number of less known women who suffered this same fate in his past. For some ministers, politicians and others, if the black man is rich, and the black woman alleges rape, she is lying and is after the black athlete's money. For some time now, I have quietly witnessed the attack of black women by some black men. I recently heard of a situation in which a black professional indicated to a white reporter that black women should not be consulted when questions pertaining to black male youth are raised because "they have been the problem." Others have continued to preach that black women are "taking jobs from black men."

Countless other ludicrous, unsubstantiated statements about black women have been voiced even in the national press. Our women have begun to internalize some of the negative views voiced by misguided men as demonstrated by their vociferous attack of the victims of Mike Tyson. If I was asked to choose one single factor which has caused the almost total vulnerability of the African-American community, I would choose the disunity between African-American men and women. In the interest of the survival of our people, this situation must change.

The final theme that leaps from the Tyson case is the rich athlete's total lack of understanding of the power of money. If properly applied, money along with the charisma and popularity the athletes exude, could change entire communities. There are a few athletes who understand this, including Wes Unseld, Magic Johnson, and Jim Brown. Wes and his wife own and operate an excellent school for black youth in the inner city. Jim Brown, has been training and seeking employment in south central Los Angeles for gang members for years. Tyson apparently used some of his money to "pay off" females whom he allegedly assaulted.

It is time for the ardent supporters of Tyson to effectively advocate and offer encouragement to him to seek psychological assistance and therapy. His problems with women will not just go away without help.

If You Have An
Opinion About
Your Community..
SHARE IT!