

Is your child getting a decent education ?

by Herb L. Cawthorne

Pause a moment and ask yourself, "Is my child getting a decent education?"

If you are the parent you should be, the question probably comes up again and again - and the attempt to answer it each time probably plagues you like a sore tooth. It's a question that requires your attention, no matter how busy you may be.

Ask yourself right now, "Is my child receiving a respectable education?" Then consider three areas - the schools, the community and yourself, the parent.

The schools are obligated to serve the Black community. We all pay taxes. And our taxes support the schools. We finance the schools to meet the obligation to impart important knowledge which enables our children to better function in this society. Given the fact that the problems in education are usually compounded and exaggerated in the Black community, it is necessary to take greater initiative to define the type of service

the public schools must render. It is necessary for each of us to get more involved, otherwise we will be hard pressed to tell whether a child is getting a respectable education, until it is too late.

We have to be bold and aggressive. It's not easy to determine whether a child is progressing well in school. In many ways the school system is made to protect itself from our active inquiry. Teachers and administrators offer excuses which tend to water down their own commitments. It is not unusual for school personnel to blame their failures on the problems in the Black community. And, of course, they say our students are unmotivated. The discipline problems often make teachers frightened and the school board even gives some instructors combat pay because our children are so aggressive. Black parents are thought to be hostile to the process of education, and educators continually complain that we fail to give adequate support.

But will we ever know what a decent education is for our children if we allow

these excuses to justify failure in the school system? Teachers have to work hard and achieve under the circumstances given. Although there is truth in some of the charges made against the community, those in the system must overcome the disadvantages and see to it that education is productive. This will not happen unless we make it happen by demanding the highest quality and letting the system know we mean business.

Visit the school your child attends. And visit regularly. In your conversations with other parents, suggest they make it a habit also. Go in teams to discuss education with the principal. Talk to the teachers. It's wise to tell them what you expect from your child as well as what you expect from them. Help teachers understand that they are working to serve you, the taxpayer, and that above all you expect their work to be the best. Teachers need to know that you are willing to help them with discipline problems, motivation problems and learning problems - express your willingness to help.

When you consistently meet with them, they will begin to understand that you expect your child to do the best work possible, rather than simply slide through.

The community is an inseparable influence on the kind of education Black children receive. It is time we took a good, hard look at our community. It is time to begin to clean up those elements which tend to drag the young through the mud - turning them away from books and learning. The influences are great. They call the child's attention like a neon light at midnight on Broadway. There are too

many ugly people who make a living manipulating our children for profit. At some point, if we want our children to get the quality education which prepares them for a prejudice world, we are going to have to call forth the courage to put a stop to as many of the bad influences as possible. This means organized community action - and we must mean business!

Finally, parents must take more initiative. If a child is left free to roam the streets of the community, we leave him subject to those who would influence him for their own gain. If parents are in-

terested in the education of their children, they should arrange for after school activity. Get them special tutors and dancing lessons; take them to special plays and speeches; invite unique people from within the community into your home to talk with your children.

Read and read and read to your children. Refuse to allow them to turn on the television until they have read so many pages or written so many paragraphs. For education in the Black community to improve, Black parents will have to take more initiative. And this is not a choice - it's a responsibility.

Convicted King assassin drops criminal appeals

by Peter Morse

MEMPHIS, TENN. (PNS) - James Earl Ray, denied a retrial last month on his conviction for the assassination of Martin Luther King, has scrapped his defense team of six years and hired a civil attorney to sue Time magazine, several authors who have written books about the case, U.S. District Judge Robert McRae, and former Tennessee Assistant Attorney General Henry Haile.

A long-time "jailhouse lawyer," Ray has already written and filed a 14-page complaint with the U.S. Sixth District Court.

Ray denies he "fired" his criminal lawyers - Bernard Fensterwald, Jr. and J.H. Lesar, both of Washington, D.C., and Robert I. Livingston of Memphis. "Usually when a lawsuit is terminated," Ray told PNS, "it's not necessary to fire counsel as the press usually alleges."

Ray's statement, plus his hiring of a civil rather than criminal lawyers, indicates he will probably not appeal his request for a new trial to the Supreme Court. This contradicts Ray's earlier statements that he would, if he lost in District Court, take his appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Ray also told a PNS reporter last year, "If I lose there, I'm going to tell all - everything I know about people and events leading up to and after King's murder in Memphis."

Ray, serving a ninety-nine year sentence, sought a new trial on the ground that he was tricked and coerced into

pleading guilty to the murder by his attorney at the time, Percy Foreman of Houston.

Less than 24 hours after his conviction, Ray attempted without success to reverse his guilty plea in a letter to the judge. His attorneys then filed a massive brief contending he was framed as a part of a well-coordinated conspiracy, citing testimony from a Memphis law enforcement official and a New York ballistics expert indicating Ray's rifle could not have been the murder weapon.

SCLC agreed in 1974 that a new trial should be held, calling Ray a "fall guy" for wealthy interests.

New Tack

But with the criminal side of his case stalemated, Ray has instructed his new lawyer, Richard J. Ryan of Memphis, to pursue civil action.

In excerpts from an upcoming book by George McMillan printed by Time magazine in January, Ray was quoted as making statements like "I'm gonna kill that nigger King." Ryan called McMillan's account a "fantasy story."

Harold Weisberg, of Frederick, Maryland, an investigator in the case for the previous defense team, believes McMillan was duped. "Jerry Ray, James Earl's brother, told me he was putting McMillan on," Weisberg says. According to Time, McMillan paid Jerry Ray and other family members a total of \$3,850 "to help with his research."

"In addition to the Time and McMillan actions," attorney Ryan says, "Ray will

file suit against William Bradford Huie and possibly other writers and publishers."

Ray has long smoldered about Huie, author of "He Slew the Dreamer," and his arrangements with two attorneys Ray previously fired, Arther Hames, Sr. of Birmingham and Percy Foreman. Hames and Foreman arranged to share royalties with Huie for the book about the King assassination.

Ray's civil suit against U.S. District Judge Robert McRae, according to Ryan, will be based on his alleged failure to file records on a 1974 evidentiary hearing.

Ryan explained Ray's lawsuits against writers and publishers by saying, "Ray feels license regarding public figures like himself has gone too far. A rubber band can be stretched along these invasion-of-privacy lines just to the extent it'll pop."

Ray's former lawyers had little to comment on being released. Bernard Fensterwald, who was Ray's chief counsel as well as the executive director of the Committee to Investigate Assassinations in Washington, said, "The exclusive reason I got into this case was for the purpose of criminal appeal. In view of the (unsuccessful) Memphis hearing and the unanimous decision in Cincinnati, the outlook was not very encouraging."

Robert Livingston said, "I think it's all over for James Earl. If Ray is covering up for somebody, and I feel like he is, he's going to suffer in silence. Or he will tell all he does know and maybe the Governor of Tennessee will consider executive clemency."

"Otherwise I see no hope for him." [Peter Morse is a veteran Memphis newsman who has followed the James Earl Ray case since the night Martin Luther King was assassinated. Formerly a radio and television newsman and a daily newspaper reporter, Morse is now a freelance writer.]

Indian fellowships available

Applications are now being accepted for the first fellowships to be offered to American Indian students by the U.S. Office of Education.

The grants will enable the students to become qualified in law, medicine, engineering and other professional fields needed by Indian communities.

A total of \$500,000 is available for the current fiscal year and will cover educational and subsistence costs for approximately 50 fellowships under Part B of the Indian Education Act.

Fellowships may be awarded under Part B to Indian students who are attending, or have been accepted for admission, as full time students in a graduate or professional program. The institution may be one of the student's own choice. An applicant's program of study, however, must provide a professional degree in engineering, law, medicine, business, forestry, or a field related to one of these areas.

The fellowship grant provides for four years of study. For each year the fellow will receive the cost of his or her tuition with an average stipend of \$3,600, an allowance of \$400 for books and other instructional materials, and \$500 to cover moving expenses should these be necessary. In addition, \$750 will be paid for each dependent.

Closing date for submitting applications is July 16th. Application forms are available from the U.S. Office of Education, Office of Indian Education, 7th and D Streets, S.W., Room 3514, Washington, D.C. 20202. The telephone number is (202) 245-7525.

Caucus attacks Ford stand

Representative Barbara Jordan (D-Texas), in behalf of the Congressional Black Caucus, responded to statements made by President Ford encouraging segregation in private schools.

Mr. Ford's statements made recently on Face The Nation (CBS), also drew sharp criticism from other civil rights groups and organizations.

The following is the rest of Representative Jordan's remarks:

President Ford's recent statements on segregated private schools - "That they should have the right to accept or reject students as they see fit," contradicts the Constitution - extends encouragement to non-Black citizens who continue their blatant disrespect for the law, as manifested through outright violence - and greatly intensifies all resistance to busing orders.

It is this type of statement - this type of attitude which serves as the catalytic force creating such incidents as Black men being beaten with the American flag during our Bicentennial year, or frightened little Black school children having to be escorted by law enforcement officials past throngs of violent whites.

Mr. Ford's statement is a political sham - a cheap rhetorical ploy during an election year to appeal to the worst instincts of a certain constituency.

The Congressional Black Caucus finds Mr. Ford's statement totally unacceptable, inexcusable, and void of sensitivity to minorities in this Great American Society. These statements by Mr. Ford hardly represent the kind of strong moral leadership needed in a President.

Peggy Joseph

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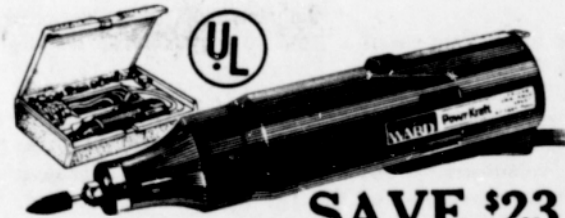
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