

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Direct anger into action

Black leaders are professing a "wait and see" attitude toward Ronald Reagan, and are promising to give the new leadership an opportunity to disprove charges of racism and indifference. They are asking the Black population to be realistic but not defeatist.

In a survey by B&C Associates of North Carolina, the average Black voter is not so optimistic and expresses an antagonism over the conservative trend of white voters.

Large percentages of those surveyed expect:

- Systematic atrophy of socio-economic programs.
- Rising militarism and international brinkmanship
- Invisibilization of Blacks and supporting whites in the political arena
- Worsening of conditions of inequity and underquality of life which affect Blacks in general
- Drastic changes in the character of the judiciary and judicial decisions
- Negative domestic and international reactions to and changes in policy toward Third World nations
- Widening the gap between Black and white incomes
- Proliferation of race-related and racist

rhetoric

- Increased Black employment and under-employment
- Passing the buck between government and corporations as to the proper source of funds and leadership to assist low income and racially isolated people.

However, attempts to turn back the clock will be incendiary. Black people cannot and will not sit idly by and watch the few gains that have been made in recent years taken away. It is for the Black leadership - national and local - to direct that anger into constitutional actions.

In preparation for that action, it behooves all Black "leaders" and organizations to get themselves together and to maintain an assault on the Legislature, City Hall, the School Board and all other local governments. There is no time for organizations that exist in name only, who have members but no actions, that spend their time in fundraising and social activities that are never directed to political action.

The survey should also be a signal to the new administration and the corporate world - if concern and viable solutions are not forthcoming, these frustrations can lead to massive protest and rebellion.

Hold neutral investigation

"Now the time has come to act and we are going to act," said U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador Robert White after the funeral of four Americans -- three of them nuns who were killed by the military in El Salvador. During 1980, over 9,000 El Salvadorians, including 21 Priests and lay workers and Archbishop Oscar Romero have been murdered by government forces and their right-wing supporters. Thousands more have been tortured and/or have disappeared.

In February, Archbishop Romero asked President Carter to refrain from supplying and predicated that in offering aid, "your government, instead of favoring greater peace and justice in El Salvador will undoubtedly aggravate the repression and injustice against the organized people who have been struggling because of their fundamental respect for human rights."

Two days after the Archbishop was murdered during Mass, on March 24th, Congress voted to provide \$40 million in economic and \$5.7 million for military aid, for 1980-81, and \$28 million for 1981-82. On Thanksgiving day six leaders of the Democratic Revolutionary Front -- a coalition of 150 church, student and worker organizations -- were murdered. Six days later the four Americans were killed. "Now the time has come to act..."

The U.S. has suspended the 1981-1982 military and economic aid (the 1980-1981 aid continues) while our government investigates the El Salvador government's complacency in the murder of the Americans. But an investigation presupposes neutrality. Who is doing the investigating? William D. Rogers, former Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs and Assistant Secretary of State William Bowdler, former Ambassador to El Salvador.

Can the State Department carry out a neutral investigation of an incident of which it has been a part?

The U.S. has been involved militarily in El Salvador since World War II, and currently plays a leading role in arming, training and supporting the "National Guard." Current U.S. intervention includes provision of military supplies, equipment and military "advisors"; training of military personnel at the U.S. military school in Panama and in Venezuela; U.S. Marine occupation of an island between El Salvador and Nicaragua; smuggling additional arms; building four helicopter bases;

participating in Honduras troop's murder of peasants attempting to flee the country.

The presence of U.S. military personnel is being reported in increasing numbers. When the El Salvador military attack mourners at the funeral of Archbishop Romero, killing about 60 and wounding hundreds, the participation of U. S. personnel was reported by foreign church officials and the foreign press. Americans are reported to have participated in raids against peasant villages, killing mostly unarmed children and elderly persons.

El Salvador is a nation of 5 million people - among the poorest in the world. Only 16 percent of the work force has year-around work. Twenty percent of the children die before the age of five. Most of the people receive half the calories necessary to maintain health; life expectancy is 46 years. Two percent of the population own 60 percent of the land; 14 families control the economy and the government.

There is no worry that the small, poor nation could be a threat to the U.S. or that the murder and torture of its people could benefit the people of the United States. Why is our government involved? Why would National Security Chief Brezezinski say, "If all else fails, we'll send in the Marines?"

American corporations have about \$40 billion invested in Central America, where cheap labor and natural resources insure high profits. The State Department believes that the fall of a U.S. backed regime in El Salvador will result in similar actions in other Central American nations and perhaps even in Mexico.

The time is very short. If the U.S. does not suspend operations in El Salvador before Ronald Reagan becomes president, there is every reason to believe that he will carry out the threat to send in the Marines. And whose young men will die in El Salvador?

We must urge that a truly neutral organization - the UN, Amnesty International, the World Council of Churches, or a similar organization - not the State Department - investigate what is happening in El Salvador, including U.S. participation, and reveal their findings to the people of the United States. Surely if the American people were aware of the atrocities being carried out in their name, their protest would bring a termination of U.S. involvement.



Bruce Broussard
Editor/Publisher

The old school

By Fungai Kumbula

They are tearing down the old school I am told. That old school where I first learned the four R's: reading, writing, 'rithmetic and racism. I should be glad they are tearing it down because I hated those run-down old buildings: they were so sloppy compared to the school the white kids went to but, somehow, I feel a sense of loss. Over the years those crummy old buildings had assumed a rather coveted spot in my mind. That's where it all started. Thinking about my old school, I cannot help but remember that time so long ago when I was so young, so innocent and so carefree...

I remember my infallible alarm clock: my father; any time I overslept, he woke me up with his ever present strap. I was not supposed to have any excuse at all for oversleeping and being late for school. For as long as I can remember, he has had the utmost reverence for education. He so badly wanted his children to have the opportunities he and mother never had.

I remember too the little, narrow, unpaved, pothole filled street that was the main 'thoroughfare' of my little village then called Epworth. Street lighting was not only non-existent, electricity was not available to Black folks, period. The myriad alleys and the 'paddock' where I stole my first kiss are played over and over in my mind. The world famous Balancing Rocks where I spent Sunday afternoon exploring the endless caves and the San (Bushmen) paintings and the proliferation of wild berries: blueberries, strawberries and African chewing gum. The old Methodist Church where I went to for Sunday dinner before going berry-picking or skirt chasing; all

these memories come flooding back.

I remember my teachers and how liberally they applied the "Mandatory" stick trying to drum into us "dundaheads" the fundamentals of education. At the time my one burning ambition was to come back when I first went to boarding school (scared stiff since I had never lived away from home - and I was only fourteen then) and how I counted myself lucky if I got \$1.00 pocket money! That's right, one dollar! The funny thing is that the dollar used to last me a whole semester! Serious! Now that I think back on it, life was so simple it was ridiculous. It sort of makes me think I have been around forever.

The boarding school years; those were crazy! I went to an all male boarding school and, once a semester, we used to visit this all girls' school nearby for dances or debates. For weeks on end, we would be preparing for this, the high point of the term. When we went to their school, it wasn't so bad. The problems arose when they came to visit us since there would be exactly forty of them for the forty of us. Soon as they got off the bus, we would "fly" (those Olympic sprinters had nothing on us!) and just grab the one we fancy by the arm. Needless to say, we all rushed for the most beautiful ones first. It was not uncommon for me to grab one girl's right arm while a rival grabbed the left one! We would then glance at each other until one of us chickened out and left to go pick one of the "left-overs." In the meantime, the poor girl would be standing in the middle not quite sure what to do.

Thinking back on it all, it was unconsciously cold the way we shunned the not-so beautiful girls. It was

a do-or-die situation though because whoever ended up with the "ugly-duckling" would be the talk of the whole school for the rest of the year. (I never earned that questionable distinction fortunately or unfortunately).

I remember all these things as I read about how the bulldozers are tearing down all those places I used to know so well. My old school particularly since it forms one of my earliest memories. Too, it had been there for as long as anyone could recall; all my brothers and sisters before me and those who came after me attended the same old school. It was a fixture in reality as well as a fixture in our minds. It seems unthinkable to imagine Epworth without this "rock of ages."

This school is but one example though. All over the country the old is making way for the new. They are doing it in the name of something called progress. Somehow it makes me sad that we cannot have progress without destroying all these fond memories. For so long I had looked forward to returning to that simple place called home, but now I am afraid, very much afraid, that I may feel completely out of place in this new, modern (and possibly sterile) atmosphere.

True, they say, "you can't have your cake and eat it too" but that's the whole reason I want the cake: so I can eat it. I need to hurry up and go home before everything I remember is gone.

That bulldozer rumbling down the highway has now started to give me feelings of ambivalence: on one hand, I am glad for all the progress we are making; on the other, I am a little sad that we have to give up so much for this progress. Memories, memories, memories.

Letters to the Editor

An Open Letter:

This is to let you know what I think about the learning map I filled out at the last parent-teacher conference in November, 1980.

I liked the idea of the teacher and I comparing our views of my son. However, the language used in the questionnaire seemed very specialized to educators. Using words not used in everyday language gave me the idea you were not really interested in communication. The teacher and I wasted time trying to figure out what you were getting at - for example the question "Does your child learn by movement?"

When I make an appointment with a teacher to talk about my son's progress in school, I do not want to spend our time filling out questionnaires. For some teachers this could be a powerful tool to keep from dealing with uncomfortable but real issues like, "can my child read? Does my son understand math? Why is he getting into trouble in class? What can we do about these problems?"

I understand that some of the reasons for the creation of this questionnaire was to bring about communication between Black parents and white teachers. This questionnaire is no substitute for the frank communication that needs to take place between parents and teachers. The time is fast approaching when words will no longer suffice and deeds and actions will be necessary to facilitate com-

munication between races.

Some ways I think racial unity may be promoted are: starting after-school programs that will interest parents and children, causing people to come together for their benefit; setting up question and answer nights at school where parents can question the principal and teachers on different points of education of

their children; stop spending money on words and paper!

I have written this letter to inform you of my thoughts. My hope is that these words will become action that will promote unity and better education for our children.

Sincerely,
Irene E. Smith

INTERESTING FACTS

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The second and third U.S. Presidents, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, both died on the same day in 1826 -- and that day was July 4.

When the income tax started in America in 1861, the maximum tax was just 3%.

The record for the hottest day in the U.S. according to statistics of the National Weather Service, was 134 degrees at Death Valley, California on July 10, 1913.

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The *Portland Observer* is a champion of justice, equality and liberation; an alert guard against social evils; a thorough analyst and critic of discriminatory practices and policies; a sentinel to warn of impending and existing racist trends and practices; and a defender against persecution and oppression.

The real problems of the Black population will be viewed and presented from the perspective of their causality: unrestrained and chronically entrenched racism. National and international arrangements that prolong and increase the oppression of Third World peoples shall be considered in the context of their exploitation and manipulation by the colonial nations, including the United States, and their relationship to this nation's historical treatment of its Black population.

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Bruce Broussard
Editor/Publisher



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