

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Black Families in Jeopardy

Black families in America are facing the most formidable challenges of any other institution of its kind in the country. In fact, the Black family is in deep trouble, and if the causes of the trouble are not addressed in a curative manner, survival of the Black family is in serious jeopardy.

The National Urban League's annual publication, *The State of Black America 1985*, has as its lead essay, "The Black Family Today and Tomorrow." The essay should be read and studied by every facet of the Black community. The schools, families, political organizations, neighborhood clubs, and churches would do well to make it a priority of study and discussion. The essay contains a wealth of information that will enable the grasping of a handle at making a response to those challenges tearing at the heartstrings of the Black family.

Even without the essay, we see symbols of trouble in the streets of our cities — men, young, old, and middle-aged standing on street corners with nothing to do and no place to go. We sense the crisis as Black on Black crime constantly occurs in Black neighborhoods, and when our young people

attack their family members.

There are three major problems facing the Black family today which account for most, if not all, of the difficulties they encounter and for so many Black babies in the stream (the essay sheds light on Black babies in the stream). These are not new discoveries nor are they problems unique to Blacks, but they have a devastating effect on the stability and cohesiveness of Black families.

The three major problems are: divorce and separation, which dissolve large numbers of Black families every year; teenage pregnancy, which creates new families in which all members are at risk; and non-employment and unemployment which are the most serious of all problems faced by Black families because they are the primary reason for their poverty.

In order to cure these problems, Black communities throughout the nation must come together and help one another, especially those Blacks who are in the position to do so. If we Blacks are to survive in the future, we need to do something now for the Black family today.



Healthwatch

by Steven Bailey N.D.

Rainbow Coalition Task Force

In mid-January, the Rainbow Coalition health care task force met to develop a policy statement on health care issues. The policy will be presented to a general Rainbow meeting February 11th at the Maranatha Church, 1222 N.E. Skidmore, for full approval.

The health care meeting was facilitated by Beverly Stein and Richard Brown of the Coalition and featured presentations by county commissioner Gretchen Kafoury and state senator Bill McCoy. While the task force was charged with developing a draft for general membership approval, there appeared to be a consensus on most issues discussed and the draft will probably receive easy endorsement from the general membership.

Senator McCoy began the meeting discussing his bill SB431, which would enact a state health plan intending to guarantee health care to all. This bill, which sat in committee last legislative

session, would so radically alter the current provider system that most of the individual issues discussed at this task force meeting would be met by its coverage. SB431, would to some extent create a socialized system in Oregon setting up a coverage plan on a state wide basis. It is not too surprising that it sat in committee last session.

Commissioner Kafoury spoke in support of SB431, and followed with comments on health concerns in general. Her comments primarily dealt with the inadequate health care for the indigent, the poor and other minorities. She also expressed concern that change cannot be achieved within the medical community, but will need something like SB431 to alter the present system. Literature presented by the Oregon Health Action Campaign mirrored these later comments on the monied self-interests of the medical lobby. Their (OHAC) figures for "Lobbying

expenses for the health care industry 1980-1984" are:

Oregon Medical Society, \$212,000; Oregon Association of Hospitals, \$121,000; Kaiser, \$117,000; Blue Cross/Blue Shield, \$102,000 for a Total of \$552,000.

This half million dollars is state monies and excludes the national lobby dollars of the AMA.

While the majority of the membership had not read SB431 (and therefore did not totally endorse the bill) there was consensus support for the items presented from the bill. The task force will, as previously mentioned, present the final draft February 11th. The major issues will include "access for all, to their chosen, quality health care", attention to current inadequacies in prenatal care, indigent care and rural health concerns, cost containment, prevention, education and improved occupational and environmental safety.

Letters to the Editor

To The Editor:

Is Amerika Creating The Permanent Underclass?

My perception of the answer to that question is yes, absolutely. And it has reached a point where only the most radically new approaches to the dilemma of being black in Amerika can prevent us from marching in lockstep toward that destiny. Or perhaps I should say shuckin' and jivin' instead of marching because we, too, are participating in our steady erosion as a people.

At the moment, I would like to deal with the Media. Media exist as one of the most powerful controlling forces in Amerika. They hold up a mirror to society at large and say "This Is The Way Things Are!" Not only our perception of others but our perception of ourselves is shaped to a tremendous extent by Media. When I was a child I put an enormous amount of energy into trying to reconcile the double image I kept getting about what black-or in those days, Negro-was supposed to mean. At close hand were a beautiful black mother, a brilliant black father, and gifted, accomplished black friends. But the sense of pride I took in what I seemed to be and what I seemed to come from was undermined by the constant message I got from Media that the civilized black world in which I moved was an isolated cocoon, a freakish exception, and what black really meant was Willie Best, slobbering and rolling his eyes in perpetual fright.

Decades have passed and nothing has changed. Caucasians still control the black image in Media and tell us who we are. If you have any doubt, let me give you some figures. We have just emerged from the era of the black exploitation film in which we were bombarded with one movie after another depicting black people as pimps, prostitutes and dope pushers. That era, thank God, is over because black filmgoers got bored with it and it ceased to be lucrative to those who fostered it. Those ugly movies that paraded an army of pimps and dope pushers in front of black children as role models to admire and emulate warped many a small black psyche and made a lot of caucasian people a lot of money. Hollywood products are seen in every nook and corner of the world. Millions of non-residents of the United States depend almost entirely on the movie industry for their knowledge of black

life as those who have been abroad can testify. Other millions of caucasian Americans of all ages confirm their belief about blacks at the neighborhood theater.

Nor is it easy to over-emphasize the importance of the movies as agents in shaping public opinion. That scenario has already begun to unfold as new generations of children read hardly at all and rely on the television box almost entirely for their perception of the world.

That black people perceive themselves as a complex entity in which can be found every shade of complexion, every degree of education and wealth, every conceivable occupation and therefore resent the uniform depiction of them as bickering simpletons, matters not one whit. As long as black people suffer in silence the situation will continue. The Italians are more alert. When the television series "The Untouchables" created the impression that organized crime was almost exclusively Italian they raised the roof and suddenly the program found it politic to unearth mobsters of other ethnic origins. The Jews are more alert. Even a program presented with such meticulous care as Holocaust has been subject to the most endless hairsplitting criticism and scrutiny from the Jewish community. As they hashed and rehashed that program in every conceivable public forum they could address, they gave us all a sharper perspective on what we had seen. Where blacks are concerned, I have watched an endless army of pimps and vicious urban terrorists parade across the screen on the police shows and clowns on the sitcoms and heard from our appointed or establishment leaders not a murmur.

When I express concern for our image in Media, don't imagine for a moment that anything as shallow as a racial ego posture is involved. The way we are perceived by this society affects the most basic areas of our lives. When you apply for a job the interviewer in personnel reacts to you not only in terms of who you are but also in terms of who he/she thinks you are. There are countless images floating around in his/her head and many of them are traceable to the Media.

You may sit in front of them as a neatly dressed, intelligent person who

would do an efficient job, but if he/she has been fed one stereotype too many they may look and see not you but Flip Wilson's "Geraldine" goofing on the job, painting her fingernails and calling up her boyfriend to chat on company time. If so, for all your qualifications, you're not the one who is going to get the job.

Dr. Jamil Cherovec

To the Editor:

By now, most Oregonians have received their State Income Tax booklets and have noticed that their tax rates have been reduced from last year.

The rates are lower because the 1985 legislature eliminated the eight percent income tax surcharge that was initiated in 1981. We determined that the surcharge could be eliminated and that our major obligations for providing services could still be met.

The law required the legislature to balance the state's budget. "Deficit spending" cannot occur in Oregon government. But there are powerful pressures to spend more each year and to increase taxes to pay for the additional spending. In spite of these pressures, the cost of state government in Oregon will increase at less than the rate of inflation for the fourth consecutive biennium.

The hard budget decisions will be with us for a while longer, and our tax reform work is not finished either. As the public continues to demand that we hold the line on state taxes, we must proceed with the difficult task of reforming our school finance and property tax systems. With this challenge ahead of us, Oregonians can take comfort from the reduction in state income tax rates. It shows that we're on the right track.

Yours truly,
Steve Starkovich
Senate Majority Leader



"BROTHER AGAINST BROTHER"

Along the Color Line by Dr. Manning Marable

In 1984, 10,728 Americans were killed by handguns. Two essential points can be made from this bloody statistic. First, the United States fosters a culture of social violence and nihilism which is unequalled in western industrial societies. By way of contrast, the number of persons killed with handguns in 1984 was 48 in Japan, 52 in Canada, 42 in West Germany, 21 in Sweden, and only 8 in Great Britain. Second, about 50 percent of all U.S. murder victims in any given year are Black Americans, and 94 percent of those who murder Blacks are Black people.

The statistics on Black-on-Black violent crime are terrifying. In the U.S., a white female has a one-in-606 chance of being a murder victim. For white males, 1 chance in 186; Black females, 1 chance in 124; but for Black males, 1 chance in twenty nine. Roughly 60,000 Blacks will be murdered in the 1980s — more than the total number of American soldiers killed in the Vietnam War. The leading cause of death among Black males age 15 to 24 is murder by other Black males.

Why are Black men murdering each other? Part of the answer resides in the economic deterioration of the ghetto. As of October 1985, the Black adult male unemployment rate was 14 percent, compared to only 5.1 percent for white male adults. For Black teenagers 16-19 years old, the official jobless rate is almost 40 percent. In innercities, the actual unemployment rate for Black young males exceeds 55 percent. CETA and other Federal jobs programs were either eliminated or severely cut. In New York City, for instance, 1.7 million people — mostly Blacks and Hispanics — were eligible for the "Job Training Partnership Act" funds, but last year only 34,000 persons were actually trained for employment with this program.

High unemployment, poor public schools, crowded housing conditions and the existence of gangs and drug traffic are the material and social factors which breed mass anxiety and repressed rage. Psychiatrist Alvin Poussaint suggests that Black-on-Black crime is essentially a form of "reactive" racist violence. In a society with white capitalist values and rampant materialism, to be Black and poor is to be a negation of the dominant cultural and social ideal. To murder someone who looks like yourself is to strike out against the actual "image" of oneself. Drawn into a violent confrontation, a young Black male — jobless, perhaps

hungry and without prospects — may subconsciously attempt to assert himself, displacing his own unarticulated aggression against his Black brothers.

Another element in the equation is the tendency of most police to consider Black-on-Black crime as nonconsequential. For instance, only about 5 percent of all murder victims in the U.S. are white males who have been killed by Black men. However, over 70 percent of the Black men currently on Death Row had white victims; and not one white male has ever been executed for the murder of a Black person or the rape of a Black woman in U.S. history. Police and courts punish Black-on-white crime most severely, while ignoring thousands of crimes committed by Blacks against other Blacks. In many cities, police simply do not investigate Black-on-Black violence; as a result, many Black victims do not report cases to the police, because they know in advance that nothing will be done.

Different organizations have begun to mobilize against Black innercity violence. In 1983, the "Black-on-Black Love Campaign" was initiated in Chicago by Edward Gardner, head of Soft Sheen Products, which promoted the goals of Black pride and collective development. Now in seven cities, the "Black-on-Black Love Campaign" uses radio advertisements, posters, and other forms of publicity to discourage violence. In Savannah, Georgia last year, the NAACP started an anti-violence task force, which has conducted educational and social awareness projects among Black residents.

However, Black-on-Black violence cannot be resolved solely through educational efforts, nor through the increase of police patrols and citizen anti-violence task forces. The murder of brother against brother is a symptom of economic, political and racial oppression. Black self-hatred and fratricidal violence is the logical culmination of economic, social and political forces which collectively crush the life and humanity out of thousands of young Black people annually. A comprehensive strategy of resistance must include demands for full employment, quality housing, urban economic development, and expanded human needs programs, which can provide the self respect necessary for young Black men and women.

Dr. Manning Marable teaches political sociology at Colgate University, Hamilton, New York. Along the Color Line appears in over 140 newspapers internationally.

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