

# Letters to the Editor

## Education and Culture

We must be for an education that will provide meaningful definitions of Black experience. We must re-define our lives. We must shape a culture, a politics, an economics, a sense of our past and future history.

The Path of tribulations undergone by the concept of culture is, today, long indeed! The opinions of "committees of intellectuals" cancel each other in a sterile dialectic; various "symposia" bring incomprehension and a hollow humanism into a timid encounter with historical truth and the progressive determination of man up against the greatest calamities known to history: Racism and imperialism. A Black person is a human being. It has become today our historical duty to re-establish ourselves in a field such as culture, because "The Dry Bones Of The Valley" are emerging from a long period of eclipse during which the most elementary attributes of man, notably that of his creativity, were contested and denied to us. According to a well-nurtured prejudice, Afrikans took no part in the general task of shaping civilization. Afrika is accused of being without history and without culture because it was necessary that this be so. In fact even without archaeological research and the tales of the Griots, ordinary common sense was adequate to realize the absurdity or rather the class-consciousness of those who managed to imagine a cultureless people.

Culture is an accumulated experience which modifies man in a linear, progressive and quantitative manner but with additional qualitative phases of **Mutation**. Everyone knows that a foul use was made of culture by the predatory powers in the course of modern history, in their appropriation, among other things, of the Afrikan people. It was first of all necessary to legitimize the various kinds of pillage and colonial domination in the eyes of established morality. To this end the natural difference between our culture and that of the people of these powers was used to justify and accredit the ignominious assertion that We did not have any culture and that a culture should be bestowed and imposed upon Us. Here started the crusade for humanization through the culturalization of the "marginal" peoples, of the people which have remained at the stage of "raw material-people", of peoples waiting to be manufactured in the Big Factory of civilized men/women.

The so-called christian caucasoid Master transforms his slave into a Negro whom he defines as being without reason, subhuman and the embittered slave then protests: as you are Reason, I am Emotion and I take this upon myself. This is how we loops the loops. The so-called christian caucasoid Master assumes his pre-eminence, and the Slave his servitude, but the latter claims his right to weep, a right which the so-called master grants him.

Recent events in South Afrika are of such a magnitude as to justify the conclusion that the world is witnessing the count down and assault that will spell the end of "Apartheid" the fascist regime of institutionalized racism, serving the multi-national corporations and their exploitation of the Black Afrikan population. The focus of all concerned people in the country must be upon the U.S. government and in forcing a disengagement from supporting the Apartheid regime. The U.S. policy in the U.N. countries to be one of blocking all efforts at forcing economic and military sanctions against the Pretoria regime. The ruthlessness with which the apartheid government has responded to the people's democratic demands have buried the myth that U.S. corporations should remain in South Afrika as an influence toward ending apartheid. That myth has been propogated by liberals and conservatives alike as a rationale for increasing U.S. corporate investment in South Afrika. U.S. corporations are in South Afrika for one reason only—the superprofits they get from the cheap labor and miserable conditions of the Afrikan workers which the fascist apartheid system make possible. The policy of die-hard racism and colonialism has the official support of the United States even while lip service is being given to "majority rule" in Afrika.

There comes a moment in the affairs of humankind when honor requires unequivocal affirmation of a people's right to freedom with dignity and peace with justice. The Reagan Administration's alliance with the apartheid regime is diametrically opposed to the interests of the people of this country. I'm inclined to believe, the apartheid system is a specific manifestation of capitalist exploitation in its most fierce and rapacious form. It is institutionalized oppression, akin to Nazism and slavery, whereby the tight control over the Afrikan workers ensure their systematic super-exploitation.

Dr. Jamil Cherovee



# Along the Color Line

by Dr. Manning Marable

Dr. Manning Marable is professor of sociology and political science at Purdue University. "Along the Color Line" appears in over 140 newspapers internationally.

## "Ed Meese, Civil Rights and the Constitution"

The old adage, "ignorance is bliss," is usually correct. One recent example of this has been provided by a new public opinion poll conducted by the Joint Center for Political Studies in Washington, D.C. Most black Americans continue to distrust the Reagan administration. However, black approval for the President has increased from 8 percent in 1984 to 25 percent this year. The sharpest increases in Reagan's approval ratings came from blacks below the age of thirty. "We are seeing younger blacks coming along who don't have any personal memories of the civil rights movement and who don't have the same keen sense of personal discrimination," states black political scientist Thomas Cavanagh. "Younger blacks feel they can make it."

Even more discouraging, the Joint Center's poll noted that blacks ranked the pursuit of "civil rights" as only the sixth most-important priority out of a list of twenty possible answers. Significantly, white Americans polled ranked civil rights as a "non-issue", at 19th place out of twenty.

Blacks can afford to be "forgetful" about washing their automobiles on the weekends; we can forget to take out the garbage, or forget to walk the dog. But we dare not forget that institutional racism still permeates America's political, economic and social order. We dare not lose sight of the fact that civil rights are not immutably etched in stone. What has been gained through more than a century of democratic struggle can be taken away in the span of a decade.

Not long ago, the American Constitution was nothing more than an apology for white supremacy. The Negro, according to Article One, Section 2, was only "three-fifths" of a human being. The Constitution's Article One, Section 9 sanctioned the bloody exploitation of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Article Four, Section 2 provided for the capture, imprisonment and return of fugitive slaves. These provisions, as well as subsequent racist legislation, were overturned through the sacrifices of millions of black people. To forget this history of democratic struggle is to ensure a rebirth of ignorance, race hatred and legal bigotry.

A second example of extreme ignorance—or at best, ideological blindness—was exhibited last month by Attorney General Edwin

Meese. Speaking at Tulane University, Meese insisted that Supreme Court decisions do not "establish a 'supreme law of the land' that is binding on all persons and parts of government, henceforth and forevermore." Meese emphasized that "we as citizens may respond to a decision we disagree with," and that government officials should interpret the Constitution in their own manner and not always follow the high court.

Immediately, legal scholars voiced opposition and outrage. Ira Glasser, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union, described the speech as "an invitation to lawlessness", and called Meese "the most radical and dangerous Attorney General in this century." Since the Marbury v. Madison decision of 1803, Americans have acknowledged that the Supreme Court's constitutional decisions were "the supreme law of the land." Even when the Supreme Court was packed with racists, and Chief Justice Roger B. Taney solemnly declared that the "Negro race has no rights which the white man was bound to respect"—this was still the law of the land. Beginning with the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution, through the 1954 Brown desegregation decision and the 1965 Voting Rights Act, the law was pushed towards the goal of racial equality and social justice for all.

Attorney General Meese now wants to reverse this democratic process. Looking backward, Meese specifically has attacked the Supreme Court's 1958 Little Rock, Arkansas, school desegregation case, Cooper v. Aaron. By a 9 to 0 vote, the Supreme Court had forced Arkansas to accept the Brown decision. Nearly three decades later, Meese blusters that this crucial ruling was "at war with the basic principles of democratic government...." Cowardly, Meese did not state whether he would have agreed with Arkansas officials or not, or whether he would have endorsed Court-ordered desegregation. But we can certainly guess which side Meese would have taken.

Another old saying is, "Those who forget their history are condemned to repeat it." To be ignorant of what Reagan, Meese and their cohorts are doing is to help them destroy our hard-fought Constitutional rights.

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

## Teen Health Clinics Good Policy

The Observer thinks the decision by Dr. Prophet, Multnomah County Commissioner Gretchen Kafoury, and other county officials to place additional teen clinics in the three schools is good public policy.

We feel that such facilities are needed in an effort to ensure that our young people are receiving proper medical services. All too often, due to the high cost of health care, many do not receive the proper medical care they need. The Teen Health Centers will make sure that all students receive primary health care.

Superintendent Prophet and Multnomah County Commissioner Gretchen Kafoury, and other officials from the Multnomah County Department of Human Services, should be commended for their concern about the health of our youth.

Ensuring that every student is healthy is the first step in educating our youth. This is the goal of the School Board and society.

The Portland Public Schools has announced plans to establish three additional teen health centers at Jefferson, Marshall and Cleveland High Schools. The clinics are scheduled to begin operation at the start of the second semester (January 26, 1987).

Dr. Matthew W. Prophet, superintendent of Portland Public Schools, said he agreed on a


request by Multnomah County to establish the health centers at the three high schools. Funding for the teen clinics will come from two sources. The Multnomah County Department of Human Services will provide the \$108,000 that is needed to operate the clinics at Cleveland and Marshall High Schools. The Jefferson clinic will be funded by a \$54,000 grant from the State Department of Human Resources.

Dr. Prophet said he agreed to allow the Multnomah County Department of Human Services to place the teen health clinics in the three schools after evaluating the data from the hearings held in the schools and on the responses and input received from principals, their staffs and concerned citizens in the community. Portland Public Schools now has four schools with teen health clinics. The first clinic opened at Roosevelt High School in February of this year.

The goals of the centers are to improve the health status of enrolled students by providing comprehensive primary health care to meet previously unmet health needs and improve learning ability and increase self-care abilities of students and their families. Staff for the clinics are from the Multnomah County Health Division.

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