

# New York's Big Apple: Racist To The Core

Their faces were contorted with rage, their bodies wracked with hate. As we marched in protest, over 2,000 strong, through the streets of predominantly white Howard Beach in Queens, New York, we saw racism in its rawest form. No longer hidden behind fluffly lace curtains and neat row houses, the obscene racism that had driven Michael Griffith to his death on a Queens highway had finally been laid bare.

Now, all major charges against the young men who killed Michael Griffith have been dropped. One of them admitted beating Griffith—even stating during the attack, "Let's go back and kill them." Yet they are now all free, reminders of the racism which pervades not only a community, but the criminal justice system as well.

Let us remember the circumstances of the Griffith death which the court so conveniently dismissed. Michael Griffith and two companions were chased by a mob of approximately 12 whites as the three left a pizza parlor in Howard Beach. The mob then repeatedly beat the three Black men with baseball bats and tree limbs. Chasing them like dogs, they forced Michael Griffith onto the highway where he was struck by a car and killed. The car was driven by a man whom one of the victims identified as a member of the mob.

These are the facts of the case, but they do not tell the whole story. For the whole story can only be seen on the faces of those who live in Howard Beach. We saw those faces as we marched: the families sitting on stoops, young and old alike showing the same looks of rage and disgust. For in this community hate is passed on from generation to generation, from the adults to the young people who screamed, "Go back home, niggers, you don't belong here."

If Howard Beach tells us anything it tells us this: in New York City, the nation's so-called melting pot, racism is a way of life. A Black man who works in the Howard Beach area told a reporter he always wears his uniform home as identification because if he didn't he

would be attacked. White security guards routinely patrol the area to ensure that Blacks, as one guard noted, "get through properly".

However, it would be a mistake to see Howard Beach as an exception in New York City. Back in 1982, three Black Transit employees were brutally beaten in Brooklyn by a mob of whites as they left a donut shop. One of them, Willie Turks, was beaten to death and left to die on a sewer grate. In 1983 three Black employees at a Veterans Administration hospital were attacked by white youths hurling bricks and bottles as they left work. The same year young Michael Stewart was beaten to death in a subway station by 11 white Transit policemen. Then, in 1984 white members of a SWAT team shot to death a 66-year-old Black grandmother during an eviction in the Bronx.

These are just a few of the racially motivated incidents which have plagued the whole city of New York in recent years. The tolerance of the Black community has been pushed far beyond any rational limit. If we are to deal with this anger constructively we must begin to build strong local, grass-roots organizations, city-wide, to keep the pressure on. Local organizations are needed which can confront racism proactively, rather than scrambling to react to each incident after it occurs.

The series of mass meetings being planned by and for the Black youth of New York City is a good start. The first such meeting will be held in a Black church and this is as it should be. For the Black churches, particularly, must assume a more active role in this struggle.

As always there are those who will now try to minimize the horror of the Howard Beach murder by defaming the character of the victims, or by ferreting out the so-called "good people" of Howard Beach. And as he has always done, Mayor Koch continues to portray these incidents as isolated incidents and not symptomatic of the deep-seated racism of the entire city. These tricks will not stop us from remembering what caused this horror, for the Big Apple has been shown to be racist to the core.

## Oregon Physician Receives National Award

E. Michael Can Buskirk, MD, eye physician from Portland, OR, received the American Academy of Ophthalmology's Honor award at the Academy's 90th Annual Meeting, Nov. 9-13 at the New Orleans Convention Center.

Dr. Van Buskirk, a glaucoma specialist, is professor of ophthalmology at Oregon Health Sciences University. Each year, the AAO recognizes those members who have made significant contributions to the Academy's continuing education programs. The award was announced at the opening session of the Annual Meeting, the world's largest forum on scientific developments in eye care.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology is the world's largest association of eye physicians and surgeons, with nearly 14,000 members. Ophthalmologists provide comprehensive eye exams, prescribe corrective lenses, and diagnose and treat eye disease.

## Cooking Seminars

"State of the Art" Microwave Cooking Seminars will be presented by Barbara Harris, author of "Let's Cook Microwave", on Friday, January 30th and Saturday, January 31 at 10:00 a.m. in the Northwest Natural Gas Building Hospitality Center, 220 N.W. Second Ave., Portland.

The \$10.00 ticket includes the revised edition of "Let's Cook Microwave" cookbook. Pre-registration is required as seating is limited. Make reservations by calling the Extension Office at 254-1500 (or your local Extension Office of Oregon State University).

## Infant and Toddler Lifesaving Course

"Infant and Toddler Lifesaving"—a class to teach parents, teachers and others who deal with children how to handle emergencies—will be offered in February and March at Emanuel Hospital & Health Center.

"Infant and Toddler Lifesaving" will be offered from 6 to 10 p.m. February 10 and March 10 at the King City Far West Federal Bank's Community Room in Tigard.

The class covers infant and toddler cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR), accident prevention, and how to handle an emergency. In addition, general first aid, anatomy and physiology are discussed to provide a thorough understanding of CPR and why it works. Certification is awarded upon completion.

The class size is limited to six participants. Register early by calling 280-4284. Course fee is \$18.

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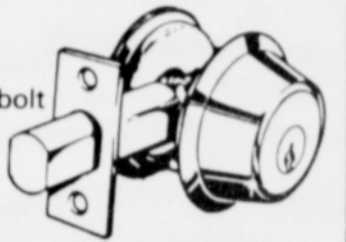
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# Looking Forward To 1987

Civil Rights Journal Commentary No. 265

by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

As African Americans and others who have waged valiant struggles for justice and freedom during the past 12 months, we are now positioned to look forward to 1987 with a sense of renewed vigor, responsibility and faith. There have been victories and there have been defeats during the last year. However, if we had to weigh our struggles for freedom on the balance of history, the victories won tremendously outweigh the defeats.

From the resounding local triumphs in the Alabama Black Belt, to the winning of congressional seats in Mississippi and Georgia, to providing the balance of power in important Senate races in states like Florida, North Carolina, Alabama, California and Maryland—we have proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that we can participate in the political process not only in our own interests but in the interest of justice for all.

The fruits of these successes should not be underestimated or taken lightly. In fact, we have seen a growing political sophistication within the African American community since 1984 when Rev. Jesse Jackson shattered the popular myths of presidential politics in the United States. 1987 will once again be a period of decision-making for Rev. Jackson. We are hoping he will run. We are also hoping that millions of people throughout the nation who were transformed by the formation of the Rainbow Coalition will start now to prepare the way for massive voter registration and mobilization. 1987 should be the year for maximizing the Rainbow vote so that when 1988 rolls around, the goal of progressive social transformation of this society can be more readily attained.

Yes, 1986 was a good year for the freedom movement, not only in the United States, but in South Africa, Latin America, the Philippines, and

## Valentine's Dances for Special People

Seniors can celebrate Valentine's Day in grand style at the Fourth Annual City-Wide Sweetheart Ball sponsored by the Part Bureau's Senior Leisure Services. Held at Ascension Catholic Church, SE 76th and Yamhill on Thursday, February 12, from 1 to 4 p.m., this free ball features George Sievert and Orchestra, refreshments, fun booths, mixers, and door prizes. For more information and reservations, call 248-4328.

People with mental retardation or multi-handicapping conditions can meet new friends and celebrate Valentines Day dancing to a live band at one of the Friday Night Dances sponsored by the Park Bureau's Disabled Citizens Recreation program. For ages 15 and older, the Valentine' dance takes place February 13 from 7:30 to 10 p.m. at Mt. Scott Community Center, SE 72nd and Harold. The fee is \$1.

If all the hamburgers Americans eat each year were stretched out side by side, they could circle the earth four times.

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throughout the world. A world-wide momentum appears to be unfolding that we should all celebrate, for more and more dictators are being removed from their thrones. This is testimony to the axiom that oppression, no matter how brutal, will always be challenged and defeated.

There are some who look back at the 1960's and assume that the progress made then was only a freak of history. But we know better. The pursuit for that which is right is continuous and never-ending. That is why we are excited about the full potential of the coming year. Rather than bemoan the plight of the oppressed, we should have clear and clearer vision of what needs to be done to eliminate the causes of wrongdoing... and then begin to make real that vision.

In Chicago we know now that we must embrace the progress that Chicago has made under the leadership of Mayor Harold Washington. We know now that we should embrace the new student activism emerging on many college campuses across the nation. We know now that we need to accelerate our anti-apartheid and anti-contra efforts, particularly to support the up-coming 1987 Spring Mobilization in April in Washington, D.C. The fact that a number of major U.S. corporations have announced their intention to leave South Africa should be greeted by increased efforts on our part to put more pressure on the Botha regime. It would be a serious mistake to raise the victory flag too soon. Apartheid has been stunned, but it is still very much alive.

On the local scene, we must continue to challenge inadequate education, poor and nonexistent housing, police brutality, spiraling unemployment, and the widespread drug epidemic. Thus, our forecast is one of challenge, change, and courage. As always, through it all, an abiding faith in the power of the forces of truth and righteousness will sustain us.

This is Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr. of the United Church of Christ for CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL.

## Public Invitation

The public is invited to an open house celebrating the relocation of the Portland Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation on Friday, February 27, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. The event will take place at 3833 N.E. Killingsworth. Visitors may enjoy refreshments and displays focusing on sickle cell disease beginning at 1 p.m. during the day. The Press is welcome to attend.

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