

EYE



ON COKE

Coke Sweetens Apartheid

The future of South Africa will ultimately be determined by South Africans, particularly by the majority who have been excluded from political power. U.S. based multi-national corporations can either assist or hinder the process of genuine change.

The divestment movement throughout the U.S. is a non-violent strategy to bring about the desired fundamental change in South Africa. Success in the divestment movement is one of the most effective building blocks toward bringing pressure on the South African Government. The Coke Campaign is one facet of the divestment movement.

Based on the September 17, 1986 announcement by Coca-Cola that they intend to disinvest, many people believe that Coca-Cola has actually disinvested. Apparently, it is important and profitable for Coke to maintain economic links with South Africa at all costs—even if they have to distort the truth.

According to an Atlanta Journal Constitution article November 9, 1986, Coke is the dominant name in the South American soft drink industry, with 69 percent of the market and 76 percent of its sales to blacks. The figures are unlikely to change despite Coca-Cola's move to divest, or sell off, its South African interests.

A financial Times article March 7, 1987 stated that Coke has offered shares of its soft drink bottling industry to 8,000 black South African retailers.

It must be remembered that the object of divestment is not to change the color of people who finance apartheid, but to end all financial support for apartheid.

BOYCOTT

COCA-COLA PRODUCTS

Contact POSAF, 230-9427, for more information.

Why a Coke Campaign?

1. Coke continues to have the largest share of the South African soft drink industry, with 69% of the market, and 76% of its sales to Blacks.

2. Coke has not actually sold any of its shares to Blacks, only offered them. The apartheid regime places severe limitations on Black business development.

3. Coke is moving its syrup plant to Swaziland, a neighboring country of South Africa that is forced to maintain close economic ties to South Africa.

4. Coca-Cola products will still be sold through 15 independent bottling companies.

Coca-Cola still helps to finance apartheid. Any corporation that makes a profit from apartheid participates in the destruction of the lives of the majority of the people. Total divestment must mean the cessation of all economic operations and connections, including license, trademarks, factories, suppliers and distributors.



CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

A NEWS SERVICE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST COMMISSION FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

The Execution of Edward Earl Johnson

Edward Earl Johnson, a 26-year-old African American, was put to death in the gas chamber at Parchman Prison at 12:06 a.m. on May 21st. He was from Walnut Grove, Mississippi and his execution marks the return of the imposition of the death penalty by the state of Mississippi.

Now that the Supreme Court has decided that capital punishment is constitutional, even given racial disparities, we will be witnessing the deaths of hundreds just like Edward Johnson. Therefore, we should understand more fully the horror this decision has unleashed.

Mr. Johnson's case is a good example. On June 2, 1979, his car broke down and he called a repair truck for assistance. That same evening the home of a white woman was broken into and she was robbed. The town marshal, passing by her home, was killed by the robber during his escape. When the sheriff discovered, only a few hours later, that Mr. Johnson had made the call, thus placing him in the area, he picked up Mr. Johnson and took him to the victim's home. The woman stated that Mr. Johnson was not the man who had robbed her.

Mr. Johnson had no previous record and was gainfully employed by a local factory. Further, one could reasonably assume that a robber would not deliberately place himself at the scene of a crime by calling a tow truck after the robbery. Yet, just two days later, the sheriff and other officers again picked up Mr. Johnson, even over the tearful protests of his grandmother, who had raised him. This time Mr. Johnson was taken to a remote area in the woods where the sheriff and his men threatened to beat his grandparents unless he signed a confession. Johnson signed. The woman, hearing of the confession, changed her mind and said Mr. Johnson was the robber. Mr. Johnson continued to proclaim his innocence, even until death.

There are now 787 African American prisoners on death row across the nation; of that number 47 are in Mississippi. According to Tanya Coke of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, a 1985 study, focusing on the death penalty in Mississippi, was conducted by Prof.

Richard A. Berk of the University of California at Santa Barbara. Ms. Coke states that the results of that study show that "discrimination is particularly egregious in Mississippi, even worse than that proven in the Georgia study [validated in the Supreme Court's recent capital punishment decision]."

These figures should not be viewed in a vacuum. We know that African American and other racial and ethnic peoples are as subject to racist violence at the hands of the legal system as they are at the hands of some crazed civilian mob. The kind of men who killed 14-year-old Emmett Till for saying "hey, baby" to a white woman in Mississippi in 1955 are alive and well and sitting as judges and juries in Mississippi . . . and in every other state in the union.

The Supreme Court's capital punishment decision admitted that the Georgia study "indicates a discrepancy that appears to correlate with race." Then, the Court added, (QUOTE) "apparent disparities in sentencing are an inevitable part of our criminal justice system." (UNQUOTE) These so-called "disparities" have cost Edward Johnson his life. These "disparities" will also cost the lives of many other African Americans and Hispanic Americans unless we join together now to mount an organized legal challenge to the Court's decision.

In his dissent to the decision, Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan warned, "It is tempting to pretend that minorities on death row share a fate in no way connected to our own, that our treatment of them sounds no echoes beyond the chambers in which they die. Such an illusion is ultimately corrosive, for the reverberations of injustice are not so easily confined."

We would do well to heed these words. We would also do well to remember the words of Edward Johnson. As he was being strapped into the chair in the gas chamber he kept saying with disbelief, "I guess nobody is going to call. I guess nobody is going to call."

This is Benjamin F. Chavis Jr. of the United Church of Christ for Civil Rights Journal.



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.

Gwen Patton: Black Activist Under Harassment

One of the greatest fighters for Black freedom and political rights in the South today is Gwendolyn M. Patton. Twenty years ago she was a student body leader at Tuskegee Institute and conducted "freedom schools" promoting voter registration throughout the Black Belt. In the late sixties Patton served as director of the Southern Student Human Relations Project and executive secretary of the National Black Anti-war Anti-Draft Union. After receiving her master's degree at Antioch University, Patton eventually returned to her home in the South. She became well-known in recent years as a television moderator and columnist for the Montgomery-Tuskegee Times weekly newspaper. As an articulate and dynamic classroom teacher/scholar, she received the highest ratings from students and colleagues at Alabama State University. Despite these strong credentials, Patton has been fired from her job at this historic Black college. Why?

All the evidence points to a blatant case of political harassment aimed against Patton. In 1983-84, Patton had become actively involved in Jesse Jackson's Presidential campaign. Running successfully as a delegate for the Rainbow Coalition to the Democratic National Convention, Patton alienated the Black political establishment tied closely to Mondale and other white party hierarchs. Chief among Patton's critics were the leaders of the Alabama Democratic Conference (ADC), the Black caucus of the state's Democratic Party. In June, 1986, Patton unsuccessfully challenge ADC leader Alvin Holmes for his seat in the Alabama State Legislature. Although Patton lost, her electoral effort clearly established the basis for more extensive Rainbow political mobilization in the future.

As Patton's progressive political star began to rise, she became increasingly under seige at Alabama State University—an institution whose board of trustees include prominent ADC chairman Joe Reed. At first the school criticized Patton's teaching and cited "poor student evaluations." Patton was eventually denied tenure on the spurious grounds that she has been instructing classes in topics outside of her specific academic field—despite the fact that she was officially assigned to such classes! Patton had no choice but to sue the university's board of trustees.

Why is Gwen Patton deemed so controversial, so dangerous to the educational and political status quo of Alabama? Because she's never apologized for being in favor of Black empowerment and equal rights. She believes that when certain Black "misleaders" consistently misrepresent the ambitions and desires of our people, they should be removed from high office. "We must empower ourselves by choosing leaders who articulate our needs and are fully accountable," Patton asserts. "We do not need political leaders who decide for everyone what is good for them."

Gwen Patton is also one of the rarest of Black intellectuals—a dedicated teacher-writer who comprehends along with W.E.B. Du Bois, that the ultimate purpose of learning is to transform political and social realities, on behalf of our people. There is no conflict between academic excellence and political engagement. There is a struggle currently being waged, Patton has written, between "close-minded Blacks" who continue to defend the system vs. Black intellectuals who are "open-minded." Afro-Americans in the second category are "penalized, sometimes violently, because they think, they analyze. The cliché 'you study too much' . . . is sadly a part of the psyche in some Black settings which adopt programs to stifle current and potential contributions and development of the Black intellectual." It would seem that ASU wants to "stifle" intellectual freedom by purging Patton from its ranks.

Jesse Jackson and the National Rainbow Coalition have already taken an uncompromising stand in support of Gwen Patton. At the Rainbow's board of directors meeting in late 1986, a resolution passed unanimously which declared: "We protest the termination of Dr. Patton by the administration of Alabama State University and call for her reinstatement . . . Her termination was a clear act of political discrimination, resulting from her leadership in voter registration/education efforts and the Rainbow campaign." Messages of political support and financial contributions can be sent directly to Prof. Gwen Patton, 46 East Patton Avenue, Montgomery, Alabama, 36105. Can we fail to support those Black activists and teachers who have already sacrificed for our struggle?

Don't Be Fooled Into Believing The Constitution Is Obsolete!!!

The American Constitution is the oldest existing constitution in the world. The year, 1987, we celebrate it's 200th birthday.

When something is around for 200 years, it is only natural to take it for granted. A recent national survey sponsored by the Hearst Corporation revealed that a majority of Americans misunderstand many basic provisions of the U.S. Constitution. For instance, 46 percent of the population do not know that the purpose of the original Constitution was to create a federal government and define it's powers.

In the first 100 years of our country the Constitution was taught in it's full text, purpose and intent in all institutions of learning. Most churches taught the Constitution in it's full text, purpose and intent as an endowment of our Creator, a gift from God. Today it is not allowed to be taught in our public schools or in our churches. As a result most Americans are in the dark

regarding detailed knowledge of our Constitution.

Only an informed Citizenry with an independent and free spirit can change the disastrous course that this country is taking. Most elected officials take an oath to uphold and defend the U.S. Constitution with little or no knowledge of what it is. For a citizen to serve as a juror or to vote without this knowledge of it, is as dangerous as a blind man walking through a mine field.

Don't be fooled into believing the Constitution is obsolete. Correctly applied and followed it is as effective today as the day it was ratified.

THOMAS JEFFERSON said, "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free it expects something that can not be."

It is also likely that an uninformed Citizenry would resort to violence when the real solution is with an informed Citizenry.

S.W. Thompson
Umatilla, Oregon

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