

EDITORIAL / OPINION

EDITORIAL

Message to Black Parents

As we prepare to roast the Thanksgiving turkey and bake the sweet potato pie; as we prepare long awaited thank-you lists and love-you notes; as we prepare for the all-night Thanksgiving party with out-of-town friends and relatives; as we prepare the thank God and friends for helping us to survive another day of uncertainty; and as we prepare to look forward to the coming of a new year, let's not forget to take some time to find out what's happening with and to our children.

Here is a message that begins with a question. Can you remember what you were doing on the nights of October 23 and 24, 1987? Can you remember who you were with? Were you with your children?

I ask these questions because on the nights of October 23 and 24, the following documented events happened:

- On October 23, 1987, at Madison High School's 30th reunion, approximately 150 Black youths and 50 to 60 Asian youths engaged in a serious life-threatening racial confrontation at a Bowling Alley across the street from the school. This incident took place between 10:00 and 11:00 p.m.
- Between 11:00 p.m. and 11:30 p.m. the same night, a Plaid Pantry store at 82nd and Fremont Street reported that a group of Black youths had taken items from the store and left without paying.
- Later that night when Tri-Met Bus No. 72 made its routine stop at 82nd and Fremont Street, a large group of Black youths forced their way onto the bus and stole a book of transfers in the process.
- On Saturday, October 24, around 12:25 a.m., Tri-Met Bus No. 8 (Irvington) was making its last run from downtown when it stopped to pick up approximately 40 Black youths. It is reported that several Black males from this group attacked a white female passenger. When she fought back, she was attacked repeatedly. After realizing that the bus driver had called for police help, the youths got off the bus and threw rocks at it.

These events reflect why we must work much harder to prepare our children to understand and deal with the outside world. For many of them, any neighborhood outside our community is viewed as part of an outside world — a foreign world — a world constructed of no-no's and taboos.

It is clear that many of our children are showing evidence of the damage racism has done to them. When a 15-year-old Black child spits in the face of a 42-year-old white bus driver, that child is exhibiting signs of anger and hate. When a group of Black children attack a white female because she is white, those children are expressing anger and hate. When Black youths walk into a store and steal and then dare the white employee to defend himself, they are displaying behaviors of anger and hate. These youths understand racism by its relationship to white skin.

This Thanksgiving, let's take time out to be with our children. Let's talk to them, hug them, play with them, inform them, teach them, love them, and assure them that they are our number-one priority. Let's talk to them about love and courage and excellence and heritage and history and brotherhood and nationhood and communityhood. Let's take time to find out how much they are hurting and what's causing the pain. Let's take time to explore their world and discover the right and wrong of it.

By doing so, we have everything to gain.

By not doing so, we have everything to lose. On October 23 and 24, we lost, and innocent people paid the price. We must not allow this kind of history to repeat itself again.



Along the Color Line

Dr. Manning Marable is Chairperson of the Black Studies Department, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. "Along the Color Line" appears in over 140 newspapers internationally.

Reaganism Without Reagan

In the wake of his second failure in two weeks to place conservative nominee on the Supreme Court, political pundits have a new tag for the President: "Reagan the Wimp."

Actually, Reagan's declining influence has been a fact of political life for more than a year. In the November, 1986 elections, the Democrats seized control of the Senate, despite Reagan's repeated campaign trips into the South to promote reactionary Republican candidates. The Iran-Contra Scandal highlighted the high degree of internal corruption and illegality inside the Reagan administration, while the President himself was shown to be either ignorant or incompetent. Attorney General Ed Meese and other former administrative peons have been implicated in the Wedtech Scandal; former White House deputy chief of staff Michael K. Deaver has been charged with perjury, and former national security advisor Robert C. McFarlane attempted to commit suicide. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, recognizing the declining powers of his old boss, has just resigned. Congress bypasses the White House on key legislation, and the Senate rejected the President's first Supreme Court nominee, Robert Bork, by the widest margin in history. And when the media uncovered that Judge Douglas H. Ginsburg, the President's second nominee, had previously smoked dope and had profound problems regarding legal ethics, Reagan's stock fell to all-time lows. The Gipper had lost his zip.

The Far Right, wounded and perplexed, now seems to be indulging in a form of political sour grapes. The key elements of Reaganism — reducing the size of federal government, deregulating markets, cutting taxes, reducing inflation rates, diminishing the power of labor unions, and gutting affirmative action laws — had failed precisely because they were not implemented and effectively enforced. "The major failure of the Reagan Administration was the failure to discipline spending," complains William A. Niskanen, a former member of Reagan's Council of Economic Advisors. Niskanen points to the continued growth of government and regulations as evidence that "there was no Reagan revolution." A similar complaint is registered by Paul Craig Roberts, Reagan's former Assistant Secretary of the Treasury. Roberts still advocates the President's bogus belief that massive tax cuts and major increases in Pentagon expenditures would not produce record deficits. History and common sense says otherwise. But instead, Roberts blames the current economic mess on the policymakers and administrators, "people whose whole political careers have told them to cut deals. The political management of Reaganomics should get a D-minus."

Niskanen, Roberts and Company are anxious to rewrite recent economic history, because they don't want to share the blame for the massive crisis which Reaganomics will generate in the next few years. Contrary to their assertions, Reagan was profoundly effective in remaking the national ideological, political and economic map. The President's ruthless destruction of PATCO in 1981, for instance, inspired a successful corporate offensive against the unions. Reagan's utter contempt for affirmative action set back the interests of women, Blacks and other people of color. His advocacy of unregulated markets and state's rights is widely accepted among Republicans and Democrats alike. Tax cuts for the wealthy combined with keeping a firm lid on the minimum wage for the poor accelerated income inequality.

But the economic "chickens" soon will come home to roost. The economic expansion of 1983-87 occurred largely because of deficit spending. Americans' savings rates have plummeted, and the U.S. owes the rest of the world more than \$400 billion. The recent stock market crash was just an early warning that something is fundamentally wrong with the U.S. economy. And the most logical solution would be, in part, to cut the swollen military budget significantly, and reallocating resources to jobs programs, health care and related human services. Unfortunately, the probable solution advanced by both parties and by almost all leading white Presidential candidates will be to cut domestic consumption, reducing many entitlement programs, and possibly adopting a value-added tax. Instead of taxing the corporations and restricting corporate flight from state to state and outside the U.S., we will see both parties try to transfer the crisis on the backs of those who can least afford it. Although Reagan's personal clout has all but disappeared, the dangerous assumptions which dictate his policies are more widely shared than ever before. A Democrat could win the White House next year, but without a fundamental change in policies, we would have Reaganism without Reagan.

The Congress will be able to reduce the deficit by 700 million dollars if it holds out for the highest price when selling one of its properties: a railroad.

When Congress approved the formation of Conrail, the government-owned freight railroad, from the remains of the Penn Central and several other railroads in 1973, it held out the hope that Conrail could be sold to the private



Taxpayers will be \$700 million ahead if the railroad is sold to the highest bidder.

Letters to the Editor

African Seeks Pen Pal

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a twenty-three year old African, to be precise a Ghanaian high-school graduate, who needs your help very badly. I would be grateful if you would help me.

My problem is that I want a Black American pen friend. It was fortuitous to have had my school situated near the office of the United States Information Services. The American Centre, as the USIS offices are called, has a library facility. So I spent some time there reading about the American people. I gradually fell in love with the Black American people. At the Centre, I read about great Black Americans like Ralph Bunche, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Muhammad Ali, Kareem Abdul Jabbar, Michael Jordan, Carl Lewis, Michael Jackson and many others. The American Centre has helped me know more about Black Americans, and now I feel it is about time I corresponded with one. I am, therefore, appealing to you to help me get a Black American pen friend by publishing this letter in your newspaper.

My particulars are: Name: Isaac Narh Ababio; Address: P.O. Box 0843, Osu, Accra, Ghana, West Africa; Occupation: Student; Hobbies: Reading and listening to music.

I would be grateful if you would make this dream of mine come true.

Your Sincerely,
Isaac Narh Ababio

Civil Rights Journal

In Tribute to John Oliver Killens

The passing of John Oliver Killens is a historic loss for all African people and for all freedom-loving peoples throughout the world. When I first head the news that John had died I paused with a deep sense of grief. For the last several years Brother Killens and I had worked on a manuscript for a book on the case of the Wilmington Ten. During this time I had the rare pleasure of getting to know him and his lovely and supportive wife, Grace.

John Killens was a freedom fighter. His weapon was his pen. Killens was an outstanding novelist, playwright, college professor, activist, organizer and mentor. He led the way for a whole generation of writers who have labored to present the African American experience authentically.

In 1952, Killens founded the Harlem Writers Guild in New York City. As playwright Lofton Mitchell affirmed, "Killens was its fire; he was its glue." Under his leadership the Guild encouraged and nurtured hundreds of African American writers. Authors such as Maya Angelou, John Henrik Clarke, Alice Childress, Lofton Mitchell, Lonne Elder III, Douglas Turner Ward, Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, Sandra Sharp, Paule Marshall, Audre Lourde, Julian Mayfield, Rosa Guy, Elsa Dinwiddie, Virgil Logan, Wesley Brown, Amiri Baraka, Arthur Flowers, Louise Merriweather, William Branch, Sarah Wright, Nikki Giovanni, Geri Wilson, Richard Perry, Barbara Sommers and many others all benefited from Killens' commitment and dedication. He had what author Alice Childress called "a generosity of spirit."

Ossie Davis recently said of John Killens, "He has influenced more of us, including Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr., than anybody I can think of. He was one of the greatest among us [and] we will miss him dearly."

Killens' first novel, "Youngblood," was published in 1954 and was recently reissued. It portrays an African American community that is locked in a life and death struggle in pursuit of basic human rights in a small Georgia town. His second novel, "And Then We Heard the Thunder," published in 1963, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. This ground-breaking novel was about the struggle of African Americans against racism in the military during World War II. His last book, "The Great Black Russian: The Life and Times of Alexander Pushkin," is presently in publication by Wayne State Press. In all, he wrote over a dozen books and plays, in addition to numerous essays and other writings.

Killens' writings continue to have an international impact. His writings have been translated into 14 different languages and his cultural influence has been felt throughout the world. Koorapetse Kgositsile, South African poet and spokesman for the African National Congress (ANC), sent a special message from the ANC to the Killens' family: "John, in his quiet, unassuming, selfless almost shy but uncompromising and determined manner taught us many lessons. We survive because of a John Oliver Killens and his understanding and vision of our world."

We all must pay tribute to this man who gave so much of himself in the struggle to rid the world of racism and oppression. The legacy of John Killens challenges us to produce and nurture more writers committed to the pursuit of truth and justice. The legacy of John Killens challenges us not to waste precious time but to use every moment to advance the cause of freedom.

Social Security

Electrocuting the Elderly

They're already drugging our children in school. Now the psychiatrists want to drug and electro-shock our elderly into early graves, and they want YOU to pay for it.

A proposed federal law, Senate Bill 1209, would give the psychiatric industry an undeserved shot in the arm with your tax dollars by permitting unlimited Medicare funding for electro-shock treatments. Thousands of elderly will have the winter of their lives degraded and shortened by this brutal practice, while the psychiatric industry rakes in millions.

Picture this scenario. Eighty-nine year old Melissa Brown has just lost her husband of 60 years. She is very depressed. She gets referred to Dr. Drug N. Shock, but can't afford his outrageous prices. But, that's no problem. Medicare will handle 80% of his bill.

Dr. Shock thus proceeds to give Melissa a series of several shock treatments over the next four weeks each time drugging her into unconsciousness with potent drugs. He collects the cash. Melissa is left with brain damage, memory loss, confusion, reduced quality of life, and perhaps a much shorter one.

All this woman needed was a little love, and some sincere conversation, things Dr. Shock knows little about.

Neurologists have been complaining for over four decades that electro-shock causes brain damage, yet the psychiatric industry has turned a deaf ear to these warnings. They can only hear the sound of money.

Now is the time to speak out against this abuse. We must not allow our hard-won tax dollars to be used to degrade and mistreat people who helped to build our country. Write to your Senator in Washington, D.C., AND TELL HIM TO VOTE AGAINST Senate Bill 1209.

Don't Overlook White Involvement

I read the article on reduction of prison terms with some interest. However, since I and one other white inmate did most of the legal research on the issue, I found it unusual that neither of us were part of the interview. One can not help but think that the whole story was not brought out. Is there some need to keep hidden the fact that whites and blacks work together or that whites are doing something for the black inmate population?

I understand that your paper is directed toward the black community, but I feel that in the interest of fairness, the whole truth should be brought to light.

I am personally going to do the memorandum of law for George Gains and I will do my very best to prove the issue for Mr. Gains and all inmates that are affected.

It should be noted that the good time issue does not appear to be available to inmates who have a minimum sentence or are sentenced to a life term. I believe these two areas should also have access to the reduction, but at this time I do not know just how this will be achieved or, in fact, if we will prevail on this issue in an Oregon State Court.

I have not read the article that was printed in the Oregonian, but I understand that it had racial overtones. This is not a racial issue; it's a point of law. As long as blacks only talk about blacks and wrong done to brothers and not all inmates, the racial issue will remain. But it will remain because the black population wants it that way, not because it actually exists. If there are wrongs done under the legal systems of at the Oregon State Penitentiary, then those wrongs are done to all, not just blacks.

Richard G. McCawley
Inmate Legal Assistant

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