

EDITORIAL / OPINION

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One very noticable aspect of community meetings is the absence of young Black teenagers, the Black male, and the Black college student. This is especially true for meetings on matters of crime, teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse/addiction, unemployment, neighborhood development, and personal growth.

Most community meetings are attended by seasoned, front-line warriors. These warriors are involved, concerned citizens who seem to have been around forever. However, during the past several years, their ranks have dwindled and their replacements have been slow to emerge.

Many front-liners suggest that the absence and lack of involvement of younger Blacks is due in part to a depressed Oregon economy. Others say it's because of a lack of cultural/social identity. And still others say it's because younger Blacks are joining the "ME" generation: a generation that believes status, materialism and individualism are more important than helping others who are less fortunate.

Whatever the reason, it is important and necessary that young Black students and young Black adults become involved in every aspect of community development.

Increasingly, young people are the target of community concern. But the message is not reaching them. More and more, teenagers and young adults are falling victim to drug and alcohol addiction, unwanted pregnancies, homelessness, prostitution, anger, social barriers and hopelessness.

The key word here is hopelessness. Many young people, especially those who've grown up during the Reagan years, believe they have no reason to be stimulated or encouraged about the past and current conditions that now exist in this country. Many of the messages they receive tend to strongly suggest that "they are the problem." Truthfully, many are treated as "problems."

The Black community cannot afford to fall into this trap. Black youth must be treated as part of the solution.

The Black community cannot merely hope that young Blacks will get involved with community development. It must make sure.

One way to make sure is to reorganize our cultural resources. The Black community has many respected and nationally recognized Black artist, musi-

cians, speakers, activists, educators, writers, business persons, and historians. Individually, they continue to achieve, but as a functionally visible group that is dedicated to influencing and encouraging young Blacks, they are as fragmented as broken glass.

It is a known fact that Black youth are influenced by those they look up to. Historically, the Black artist, the Black educator, the Black activist, the Black business person, etc., have always played a big part in the personal growth and development of young Blacks.

When you ask some young Blacks why they don't attend community meetings, they often say, "We don't feel welcomed. Besides, you guys aren't getting anything done." This perception is fueled by our inability to solve the problems of racism, unemployment, crime and the abundance of other problems that pop up on a daily basis.

We need our young people as much as they need us. We must now learn how to convey this message very clearly. If we don't, we stand a chance of losing an entire generation to ignorance of basic, important issues that will determine the direction in which their lives will go. Under these conditions, they will lose the right and the ability to control what is happening to and with them. Such an attitude will almost guarantee that their children will carry on the same tradition — a tradition of non-community involvement and a lack of knowledge of the real issues.

We must let Black college students know that they stand at the front of this movement. They will be next in line to replace those who have kept our community in a constant state of positive political, social, cultural and economic evolution. We must stress responsibility and bestow upon them the tools and techniques they'll need to meet the challenge.

In the future, organizations in the community should make it a goal to recruit a certain number of young Black, white, Asian, Hispanic and Native American youth to attend meetings, social gatherings, and any other gathering of importance.

If we make these young people feel important, wanted, needed and secure in their effort to join forces with the older generation, then we can rest assured that we have a bright future ahead.

Civil Rights Journal

Benjamin F. Chavis Jr.

Victory in Keysville, Georgia

Victory is sweet. Just ask the African American community of Keysville, Georgia. Against strong opposition from the white community which controls the town, African Americans, on January 4th, elected an African American mayor and four African American councilmembers.

After we discussed the upcoming election in an earlier commentary, a number of callers, including several media organizations, asked us for further information. They became interested not only because Keysville's majority Black population had no sewage system, no running water, no indoor plumbing and no control over the affairs of the town, while the white residents had all of the above.

Rather, what was of greater interest was the fact that the January 4th election was the first time that African Americans had ever voted in a local election since administration of the town had been remanded to the county in 1933. This was an historic election with national implications. And it came about because the African American community of Keysville decided that if they reactivated incorporation of the town, they would be able to tax residents and, thus, attain essential services which they do not enjoy at this time.

The white community, fearing a change in the traditional power relationship, fought the election.

Black voter turn-out would be crucial — and turn out they did. On Election Day, over 85% of the African American electorate voted. This tremendous voter participation was no accident, however. It came about through prolonged and intensive voter mobilization activities.

For the past year-and-a-half Ashaki Binta, a seasoned organizer from the Christic Institute, a public interest law firm, has been based in Keysville. She worked in and with the community day after day, to plan strategy and to organize the voter mobilization and registration campaign. Working with her were

local residents like Mrs. Turetha Neely, the African American superintendent of elections.

As Mrs. Emma Gresham, a retired teacher and the new mayor of Keysville, asserted, "We met every Monday night since 1985. Even if we didn't have but four people in the room, we never stopped meeting. And then the meetings started getting bigger and bigger. Before you could have had them in my living room. Now we have to hold them in the community center."

Mrs. Gresham also talked about the voter education marches held every Saturday by Rep. Tyrone Brooks, the African American state representative from their district. She also talked about the assistance of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, particularly their youth members and their Executive Director, Dr. Joseph Lowry. She spoke with pride of the serious commitment of local youth, saying, "They are truly our hope for tomorrow and our hope for today, too."

Campaign workers left nothing to chance. Under Ms. Binta's direction they gathered the names of every potential voter and canvassed door-to-door. On Election Day they instituted a sophisticated car pool and had babysitters and hot food available for the voters.

Their organization paid off. The entire Concerned Citizens' slate won, with the exception of one write-in candidate who lost by only two votes. At the joyous rally which was held in an overflow African American church on election night, Mrs. Gresham warmly thanked the people of Keysville for their support and their hard work. She also thanked God, saying, "God truly has a timetable and this is Keysville's time."

However, not everyone understands that. The white slate is challenging the election in the courts. But, as Mrs. Gresham says, "This court challenge is just a little hurdle because the people of Keysville have already spoken."

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

How many people are aware that the State Board of Higher Education has ordered all seven state universities and colleges (OSU, OIT, etc.) to convert from the traditional school year of three terms to a two semester system starting in late August of 1989?

I appeared in person before the Board at its December 18 meeting and requested that they call a halt to all semester conversion activity until June 30, 1989. There has been limited input accepted from faculty and students. No public hearings were held by the board. At the present time, I know that at least 31

Legislators are in agreement with the request to postpone conversion activity.

The Chancellor's office has assured the Board and the Education Sub-Committee of Ways & Means that there are no costs involved in switching to semesters. That is a very flawed claim. There has to be tremendous expense involved, both in budget dollars, and in lost teaching time, as the Professors completely rewrite every course by this June.

Most community colleges are not planning to convert to the semester system for various reasons including costs. Yet the 1987 Legi-

slature was assured that the conversion to semesters would only be done in cooperation with community colleges. The fall semester beginning in last August will have a very adverse effect on students who need to earn their college money by working in tourism/recreation, agriculture/food processing, timber and construction related activities. Not only will the students be adversely affected, so will the natural resources related businesses who have need of employees only for the summer season which extends beyond Labor Day.

The 11 members of the State Board of Higher Education should

reconsider their position. There is no conclusive evidence that changing to semesters will improve the quality of education. It will reduce by at least one-third the number of courses a student can take in a four-year period. There will be complications and costs galore if the conversion is allowed to proceed.

If you are concerned about the change, or want more information, please write me at 27070 Irish Bend Loop, Halsey, OR 97348.

Liz Van Leeuwen
State Representative
District 37

Establishment Media Control

Concerning "Heroine Angered Over Media Coverage," 1-20-88, by Nyewusi Askari: It's a shame the caucasoid news media would attempt to criticize Ms. Catherine O'Hara. Our so-called democratic society is mortally imperiled by racism — a cancerous disease which will destroy not only an individual, but also, if allowed to metastasize without radical surgery, a great nation. The Black masses are now threatened with the most grievous form of ignominy — the most cutting form of racism — that of "nobodiness."

One need only consider the enormous quantities of newspaper, periodicals, radio and television programs operating in the United States today to see the fundamental relationship of the media to state power. Creating and transforming consciousness, the "mainstream" media in present day Amerika [sic] operate in monopoly fashion, like all the other centers of capitalist power. While the material monopoly of electronic giants such as ABC, CBS and NBC is deplorable, even worse is the monopoly and uniformity of content that they have established; and in similar fashion, the giants of the printed world — Times, Newsweek, and the Hearst chain. The New York Times, Scripps-Howard, Knight, etc., or-

ganize, conceptualize and report the same information in almost identical fashion.

Contrary to its own rhetoric, the function of racist bourgeois media is not to provide information and the free flow of ideas, but to indoctrinate the reading public in perpetual affirmation of established values.

The Portland Observer must continue to present the Black critique of Amerikan [sic] and world events. It is to the examples of John Russwurm, Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass and W.E.B. DuBois as publishers, editors and journalists, that we must aspire. It is incumbent upon the Black media to exercise its strength to the end result of expanding the communities' consciousness and political power.

In a nation so vast, communications — written, audio and audiovisual — are the matrix which can either unite us as a people or, if misused by the majority group, can encourage and propagate institution racism, both overt and covert. Why didn't they tell the mother to have her son checked because Sister Catherine might have AIDS? I'm inclined to believe the printed media or the daily newspapers, radio and TV of Amerika [sic] are the most racist of all forms of communication.

The Civil Rights Journal, written by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., is a publication of the United Church of Christ.

The Black press, since the founding of Freedom's Journal 161 years ago, has been the only spokesman for the teeming millions of Blacks in Amerika [sic], the only light to open the broad highways of hope so that our children's children may live fruitful lives. Every man at some moment must discover that he has a cross to bear. The cross that the Black press has borne proudly over the years is proclaiming the evils of racism. The insensitivity of the establishment is such that, while the Black press is dealing with the problem of racism, the caucasoid press has been ignoring it.

And caucasoid corporate Amerika [sic] seems to conspire against the Black press by withholding advertising, without which no press in this country can survive. The Black press must light torches, even bonfires, to expose the misery, the deprivation, the crimes against the Amerikan [sic] creed. We must never be satisfied with cursing the darkness, alone. But if we proclaim to the world the one-ness of 45,000,000 Blacks, wandering in Diaspora, we shall be worthy of our heritage, knowing we have sustained the fabric and the matrix of our

most previous survival asset — as we proclaim that Blacks have, and belong to, each other; and, because of this indivisible circumstance, have a common fate.

As I close, let us make a covenant among ourselves: That we shall invest in the common welfare of our Brother man, to tell it like it is, without fear or favor. We must stop talking about men like Jesus Christ, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., The Honorable Elijah Mohammad, and live by the principles those great men layed down. Men and women of good will must keep pounding on the citadels of an insensitive, avaricious establishment, demanding the equal control of the newsprint and the airwaves, as a first step toward freedom and self-determination, until that good day when there are no longer domestic colonials but neighbors dwelling side by side, willing to save a life, like Sister Catherine — a family of people.

I would like to remind that female reporter that Dante has warned: "The hottest places in Hell are reserved for those who in times of great moral crisis do nothing."

Dr. Jamil Cherovee

Prostitution and the Law — Con't from Page 1

motels along Interstate Avenue are involved in allowing criminal activity, but a great number of them are. Potter said it is estimated, by people who work with the prostitutes along Interstate, that anywhere between 80 and 90 percent of the business of the motels comes from prostitution and drug dealing. He said a meeting with motel owners and citizens from the Overlook neighborhood produced positive recommendations, in particular (1) that a sign be placed in motel rooms that say all occupants of a room

must be registered with the motel and (2) that all persons not registered with the motel will be subject for arrest for trespassing. However, Potter said, they had received information that very few of the motels were implementing the recommendations.

The ACLU explained the legal aspects of prostitution. According to the ACLU, citizens have the right to challenge statutes that they consider unfair or unconstitutional, and that police departments have to be careful when trying to interpret be-

haviors defined as enticing, soliciting, or procuring. The courts have struck down, as unconstitutional, many statutes that were designed to punish people for lewd behavior, or behavior that's provocative or behavior that interferes. The ACLU said the problem occurs because no one understands what such words mean.

It was apparent during the question and answer session that many citizens are still taking a wait-and-see attitude when it comes to police handling of prostitution/drug enfor-

ment. Many say the Portland crime wave of 1987 has convinced them that words and statistics, no matter who speaks them, are not crimestoppers.

However, this wait-and-see attitude did not interfere with citizens' opinion that the forum served its purpose.

Said one satisfied participant, "This is what it's going to take to deal with the problem — getting together like this and showing that we all are determined to work together to solve these terrible problems."

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