

# EDITORIAL / OPINION

## GUEST EDITORIAL:

### Low Voter Turnout

by John E. Jacob

Less than half of all voting age Americans bothered to vote in 1988. George Bush got a majority of them, but that still left him with such a small share of the total potential vote that it's hard to see how he - or any president - can fairly claim to have a mandate from the citizens.

The last time such a small percentage of the population bothered to vote was 1924. As recently as 1960, almost two-thirds of voting age Americans went to the polls, but the percentages have been steadily slipping ever since.

In other democracies, voter turnouts of 70 to 90 percent of the eligible population are common. So we can do a lot better.

One barrier to voting is embedded in the nature of our campaigns. In 1988 especially, there was little to excite voters. In fact, many were turned off by the candidates' negative ads, their refusal to present detailed plans for the future, and their subordination to the media specialists and packagers who ran their campaigns.

A second barrier is the media, which let itself be used by the candidates' managers, and largely failed to cover the issues in depth. TV newscasts were driven by the 30-and 60-second "sound bites" and photo opportunities that worked against serious discussion of issues and stands.

Still another barrier is alienation, and that may be the most dangerous of all. Too many citizens feel left out of our society. They don't believe in their ability to influence the decisions that affect their lives. They see politicians of both parties as looking out for themselves and for the affluent, and not caring about poor people. This

is dangerous because it undercuts the very meaning of our society and of democracy. We're supposed to have government that represents all of us, and each American is supposed to have a say in who represents him or her. When people feel and act as if that ideal is a falsehood, then the very idea of democracy is in danger and our civic life is impoverished.

Political leaders are too cynical about this - they try to register the non-voters when they think it will serve their cause and frustrate registration drives when they think it may harm them. Actually, a nationwide drive to register everybody is a non-partisan vote of faith in the democratic system.

Finally, there are structural barriers that work to keep people from the polls. A complex web of state and local election rules sometimes seems designed to stop people from voting rather than encouraging them.

In many places working people have to lose work time and pay to travel miles to the county courthouse to register. In others, they lose the right to vote if they move to a new address before the election. In still others, they need to make time-consuming document searches to prove eligibility.

All of these - and other restrictions - can be replaced by automatic, permanent registration that enables citizens to vote without hindrance. In this computer age it should be easy to do that.

We live in a dangerous, complex world, and we need to have a thriving democratic decision-making process. That means making sure that all of us take part in the electoral decisions that will shape our lives.

### Letters To The Editor:

This letter is written as a tribute to my friend, Mulugata Seraw who was brutally beaten to death.

Mulugata was an extraordinary human being. His gift to those he associated with was love and respect.

I first met Mulugata when he was 20 years old. He had just newly arrived from Ethiopia. I was a first grade teacher at St. Thomas More School and he was the newly hired custodian. I remember how the children responded to him with love and trust. He was never too busy to help with any of their special needs. Mulugata was patient and kind.

The faculty liked, respected and admired this slim, quiet young man who worked with great diligence, helpfulness and always maintained a cheerful attitude, in spite of constant demands from a busy staff.

I remember Mulugata for his self-sacrificing manner. He chose not to buy himself a winter coat one year, so he could send extra money to his

family in Ethiopia. Most of all, I remember Mulugata for the prayers and concern that he showed toward the needs of others. His thoughtfulness and pure spirit were expressed in his everyday behavior. He was the finest example of a mature young person I had known.

Mulugata had great respect for women. It has been alleged that two women were present at his murder. It's quite ironic that people he had such respect for were in some way involved in taking his life.

I can only hope that the killers of Mulugata will be justly punished. If a prison sentence is given, these persons should be compelled to send Mulugata's family every penny they earn.

It's a sorrowful time for me ... Mulugata was dearly loved and respected by all who knew him. I will miss him always and cherish his memory.

Sincerely,  
Cygnette Cherry, Portland Oregon

## Perspectives

### The Black Church: A Real History



Professor McKinley Burt

Black from all walks of life - including, importantly, many teachers - now descend each summer upon Africa and Greece by the plane load to examine a new vista of their heritage. Finally, we have moved beyond the limiting view of slave-holding pens on the coast to view the truth of great black civilizations that reached their heights while Europe was yet barbarous and illiterate.

So many Greek rites, legends and mythologies (adulterations of original concepts of their African overlords) were incorporated into the early Christian church that we would do well to examine. A September, 1986 Associated Press report says that the **Delphi Temple** in Greece - that nation's most impressive classical site (**Apollo's** sacred place) - would be threatened by pollution from a proposed aluminum plant. What we are not told, of course, is that it is a replica of the **original Delphi Temple** in Africa, and was established by Egyptian surveyors and geographers. It appears on their maps and grids on original papyri and on stone.

"The Greeks narrated that two **black doves** flew from the Temple of Amon in Egypt to their oracle at

Delphi. In ancient African literature and iconography (and the Bible) the flight of two doves is very symbolic; it is also the standard symbol for 'the stretching of meridians and parallels' by African surveyors (Delphi was the geodetic center of Greece - see Stechinni, Ancient Measurements) .... The heads on **old Greek coins** have been identified as Delphos, son of Melania (Melanin - Black Women), mythical founder of Delphi." (See Edward L. Jones, pp. 16, 17, Profiles In Black Heritage)

"The principal god of Delphi was **Apollo**, originally an African folk god whose name means 'The Stone'. Excavations by archaeologists reveal 'The Stone' to be ancient African surveyor markers (Omphalos), found from Nubia (The Sudan), to Palestine, and eastward to Babylon and today's Iran and Iraq (see Tompkins, Secrets of the Great Pyramid, p. 349)

When we examine more directly other aspects of African presence in the formation of the early Christian church we find that there were "three early **Black Popes**: Victor (189-199 A.D.), Melchiodes (311-312), and St. Gelasius (496 A.D.). It was Melchiodes who led Christianity to final triumph against the Roman Empire." It is a very transparent act when we find two modern French historians, Marrov and Bonner, spending page after page denying that the great African religious scholar, St. Augustine, was black. It was just too much for a racist establishment, in spite of ancient testimony, to admit that the most influential philosopher in the shaping of Christian Theology was a black, born and bred in Africa. St. Augustine was the author of **The City of God and the Principales** (see J.A. Rogers, 100 Amazing Facts About The Negro).

In addition to this scholarly and structural input of the Africans, we find that the magnificent festivals, processions and ceremonies of The early Christian church was of **African Origin**. On the innerface of the East Pylon at the Temple of Edfu we find a detailed description of the **Annual Festival of the Reunion**. "Excitement pervaded Dendera, Hathor's city on the 4th of the month of Epiphi and festivities followed one another practically without interruption." This ceremony began in **2000 B.C.** and was highlighted by a trip up the Nile in gaily decorated barges, whereby Hathor, the Bride, sailed to Edfu to meet the Bridegroom, Horus (the very same "Horus" with whom Thomas Jefferson was fascinated - he, like Isaac Newton, thoroughly studied black history). Tens of thousands of pilgrims followed the barges, on land and by boat. There were singers, 'shouters', musicians, harpers, dancers and drummers; "Make a Joyous Sound Unto The Lord" (Psalms 66:1)

There is much, much more but not enough room. If readers request this series will be continued later: Pope Julius I sets Christmas Day as the birthday of Christ to coincide with that of Osiris (the father of Horus) who was the African god of vegetation and resurrection, and so forth.

### The Other Side The Endangered Species



By: Harold C. Williams

Our society has destroyed a lot of life given entities that can never be replaced. It appears that the Black man is becoming one of those entities. He has become the endangered species which everyone fears, lies on, hates, and blames for their shortcomings in our society without looking at the cause and effect within themselves.

The Black man must reassess his political value, his economic impact, and his value to the family. These components will determine the survivability of the Black man in this society. We are being criticized for the economic shortcomings in this country, blamed for all of the welfare woes, and last to be recognized for employment. We are being attacked viciously on the streets and the justice system views itself as "Just us" being behind bars that represent their claim for justice in our society. We must embrace the fabric of our

community, which are our children and their hope for the future. But if we don't take the opportunity to stand up and be counted, we will not be in existence long enough to be heard. For no one will give us the stage of fair play unless we take it ourselves. We must come to the podium prepared to make our claim for justice. For our existence is the bloodline of the society even with all of the hate and negative dispersions cast upon us. We are the lifeline of the society.

We are the only male species that haven't betrayed the society in mass and yet we are given the least amount of respect. We can no longer expect people to give us respect. We must take it. We take it in our actions of credibility and a clear plan for our future that we have designed with and for us if we are willing to come to the forefront. This endangered species can be saved. The question is do we as Black men love ourselves enough - the endangered species?

### Creed Of The Black Press

The Black Press believes that America can best lead the world away from social and national antagonisms when it accords to every person, regardless of race, color, or creed, full human and legal rights. Hating no person, fearing no person, the Black Press strives to help every person in the firm belief that all are hurt as long as anyone is held back.

## CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

### A Salute To Bill Cosby



by Benjamin F. Chavis Jr.

We salute Dr. Bill Cosby for his many years of support to the civil rights movement and to African American educational institutions. In particular, we pay special tribute to Bill Cosby for his recent twenty million dollar gift to Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. This college has had a long history of providing an excellent higher education for African American women.

Too often African Americans who score record successes in the entertainment, sports or business arenas forget about where they have come from. Bill Cosby and the Cosby family are models of African American success, leadership and, most importantly, commitment. The gift will enable Spelman College to build a new academic center to be named after Camille Cosby, Bill Cosby's wife. Bill and Camille are no strangers to the civil rights movement. They both have been supportive and involved in many important social justice causes and campaigns across the nation.

The Cosby Show is another example of the creativity and genius of Bill Cosby. It is the only program on television that portrays a positive image about African American

family life in the United States. At a time when there is an overall resurgence of negative attacks on African American family life in the national media, the Cosby Show stands out as a important alternative.

If the majority of African American millionaires would follow Cosby's example, then many of the African American colleges and universities that are now facing financial disaster would be able to overcome the difficulties. In fact, this should be a responsibility for all African Americans, not just those who are fortunate to be millionaires. The support of these educational institutions should be a paramount concern for the entire nation, particularly to the community that these institutions primarily serve.

Thus, we join with Dr. Johnnetta Cole, the president of Spelman College, in saying, "Thank you, Bill and Camille Cosby." We salute you for your continuing efforts in behalf of the empowerment of the African American community and other oppressed communities. The cause of justice and freedom is greatly served by your commitment.

## National Education Association President Speaks To Minority Journalists

Unless the nation moves quickly to educate its growing minority student population, it will lose in its effort to regain a global competitive edge, National Education Association President Mary Hatwood Futrell told 100 leading minority journalists this month.

These students must develop the skills essential for them to contribute to our increasingly information-based economy, and the United States can no longer afford to under-educate or waste what will soon be one-third of its human capital, she said.

She made her remarks at a historic first joint meeting of the boards of directors of the National Association of Black Journalists, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, the Asian-American Journalists Association, and the Native American Press Association, in Baltimore, Md.

Demographic projections show that by the year 2020 minorities will make up 35 percent of the students in the nation's schools. The Black population is expected to grow from 11 to 14 percent. The Hispanic population - not including Puerto Rico, which presently has 3.3 million residents - will grow from 8 to 15 percent. The Native American population will double to 1 percent, and the Asian population will increase from 1.5 to 5 percent.

Five issues she raised were segregated schools, tracking, bilingual instruction, the English-Only movement, and a growing minority teacher shortage. All must be addressed, she said.

"Of 32,380 schools across the nation surveyed by the U.S. Department of Education, 13.3 percent have between 90 and 100 percent minority enrollment," Futrell said. "Hispanic students are now more isolated from non-Hispanic whites than are Black students. The trend is still growing."

White students also are victims of racial isolation. "It instills in them a provincialism and false perception of their place in the world," she commented.

Tracking, Futrell said, has helped create a system of education that "provides one student with an education that can be redeemed at a university, while another student gets an education that does no more than indicate four years of attendance in a high school.

"By its very nature, it encourages some students to read Socrates while others read comic books. Because of tracking, economically disadvantaged students are far more likely than their middle-class or affluent peers to be labeled 'slow' or 'retarded,'" she said.

Futrell recommended that efforts and the resources devoted to bilingual education be increased. "For the estimated 3.5 million students described as 'limited English proficient,'" our schools provide few chances to participate in the literate exchange of ideas so fundamental to learning. Numerous studies show that the more intensive the instruction in a student's native language, the better the results on English-language tests in reading, writing, and math."

The task of educating minority youth is made difficult by the shortage of minority teachers, she emphasized. "Today, minority teachers comprise a mere 8 percent of the K-12 teaching force in our public schools, and that figure is projected to drop to 5 percent by the end of this decade.

"This denies minority students positive role models they need in school. Additionally, we owe all students a vision of the racial, ethnic, and religious mosaic that is America - the diversity that is our strength. We must launch an unrelenting campaign to recruit more minorities into the teaching profession."

Futrell cited NEA's "And Justice For All" reports, released last year, as one measure of its commitment to address problems of minority schoolchildren. "We're spending \$700,000 this year to implement recommendations of our task forces that worked on these reports, and will spend \$1 million next year," she said.

"We must let all of our students know that no group or nation has or can ever have a monopoly on excellence if other groups and nations are willing to work equally as hard. Excellence is something that is attained through patience, hard work, and development," she said, concluding, "The United States cannot wait any longer to address the challenge of educating every student to reach his or her potential."

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