

EDITORIAL / OPINION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:



Dear Editor:
My name is Chezaræ Simien, I'm a student at Benson High School. I'm in a program called Close-Up Foundation. I'm writing to get your support.
This will be Benson High School's seventh year of student participation in the Close-Up Foundation. Close-Up is a weeklong government studies program for high school students. The entire program takes place in Washington, D.C. It reflects the belief that a "close-up" look at our government democratic process through workshops, meetings with members of Congress, representatives of Cabinet departments as well as members of the media.

The cost for Chezaræ is \$933.00. To meet this cost, it is necessary to seek financial help for Chezaræ. Contributions are tax-deductible and your contribution is greatly appreciated by Chezaræ. No contribution is too small. Please make your payable to Benson Close-Up Foundation, and mail it to: 546 N.E. 12th Ave., Portland, OR 97232, Benson High School. The tax-deduction number is 23-7122882.

If you need more information please call. Thank you for your time and support.
**Sincerely, James N. Owens
Teacher/Close Up Coordinator
Student/Chezaræ Simien**

Dear Editor:
During the new 1989 legislative session, the Oregon legislature will consider a bill that will mandate health care benefits for infertility treatment to the extent that pregnancy and contraception are currently covered. "Senate Bill 16" is similar to bills already enacted in five states (i.e. Maryland, Texas, Hawaii, Arkansas and Massachusetts) and under consideration in eight others. It would make available the treatment necessary to overcome fertility problems experienced by an estimated 34,000 couples in Oregon, restoring their basic right to have and raise a family.

For years infertility has gone unrecognized by society as a legitimate health problem. Infertility is a very painful and isolating condition. For most couples it is a very personal matter, so personal that sometimes family and close friends are unaware of their problem. Infertility introduces profound and divisive stress into a marriage. Feelings of anger, helplessness, isolation, resentment, guilt, and intrusion into the couple's private life by doctors and well-wishing family and friends may tear apart the love that bound the couple, though starting a family should have been the expression of that love. For most, adoption can't overcome the pain of infertility; the expense (often over \$10,000), intrusive screening by adoption agencies, and the lack of babies available for adoption make it the answer for only the lucky or privileged few.

Though rarely discussed openly, infertility affects a large portion of our Oregon population. Many young couples cannot afford to pursue treatment and must forego bearing the children they desire because most insurers do not cover infertility treatment. More than half of these couples could conceive with appropriate medical therapy. Moreover, a 1988 government study acknowledges that infertility is most effectively treated in young adults, though the young are least able to afford the necessary treatment. In part reflecting this, data from states which require insurers cover infertility treatment suggests

that the cost of extending this coverage in Oregon would be approximately 40 cents per person per year statewide.

Proposed "Senate Bill 16" will provide equity for the infertile in Oregon, who pay health insurance premiums but do not receive coverage for treatment of their condition. The additional cost of providing this coverage is minimal in light of the anguish of those who must abandon their dreams of a family simply because of treatment costs. Presently many insurers refuse payment for infertility claiming that it is elective. Ironically, insurers often cover voluntary sterilization, abortion, and penile implants and do not regard them as elective.

Resolve of Portland, Oregon the local chapter of a national support organization for the infertile, strongly supports the proposed legislation and asks you to address this bill in your newspaper. Approximately 34,000 couples in Oregon are affected with this problem and need to know that this legislation is under consideration. It is absolutely critical that we mount an intensive letter writing and phone calling campaign of our state Senators and Representatives. Please help us by printing this letter. Some of your readers could be affected, may have family or friends who are, or may sympathize with couples touched by infertility. We urge them to demonstrate to the legislature the impact of the proposed bill by calling or writing their state Senator and Representative and asking them to vote "yes" on "Senator Bill 16." Anyone interested in finding out more about this bill or, would like information about support for infertility, please contact the Resolve of Portland, Oregon Legislative Committee at 225-1229 (evenings), 279-8449 (days), or 661-6435 (days until 2 p.m.).

Every single letter and phone call will make a difference!

Thank you for considering this issue, and for any support for the passage of this legislation your newspaper and readers may offer.

**Sincerely,
The Resolve of Portland, Oregon
Legislative Committee for
"Senate Bill 16"**

Civil Rights Journal Racism: Miami's Vice

by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

As millions of people in the United States and throughout the world celebrated the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., another case of police brutality and misconduct in the city of Miami, Florida exposed the rampant, naked racism that continues to be all too prevalent in the nation where Dr. King's life was sacrificed for the cause of racial justice.

When Miami police officer William Lozano shot and killed 23 year old Clement Lloyd, an African-American who was driving his motorcycle through an African-American section of Miami known as Overtown on January 16, 1989 a full scale riot erupted. The next day another African-American, Allan Blanchard, 24, died from injuries he received as he was thrown from Clement Lloyd's motorcycle after Lloyd had been shot in the temple by Lozano.

There has been much national attention that has focused on the riot that occurred in Miami. Yet, the causative factors of the riot have not been dealt with sufficiently. This recent riot in Miami was not the first racial confrontation in Miami resulting from police brutality. We recall that back in 1982 a similar case of police brutality where a Miami police officer shot and killed an African-American which caused a riot. Before that, in 1980 in the African-American section of Miami, known as Liberty City, the unjust killing of an African-American by the Miami police

caused a racial riot that left 18 people dead and over one hundred million dollars in damage.

Although Miami Mayor, Xavier Square, has promised an investigation into these recent police killings, it is clear that the mayor's priority has been to protect Miami's image as a city for tourism and business trade at the expense of justice for the African-American community. In an interview published in the New York Amsterdam News, Leo Casino, a political activist in Miami stated "The cops actions shows the contempt Miami's 1,000-man police force has for the African-American community."

Church leaders and civil rights leaders in Miami have all voiced their grievances to the power structures of Miami, but to no avail. Racism is a deadly evil. The fact that police departments across the United States maintain the proclivity to use unnecessary deadly force against African-Americans and other racial and ethnic persons is an indication of just how dangerous it is to live in a racist society.

All citizens of this nation are entitled to be free from this type of persecution, yet, history teaches us that these kinds of atrocities are only prevented by the organized and mobilized will of the victimized community. We must not allow the African-American community of Miami to stand alone in the face of this brutality. Miami's racist violence and vice must not go unchallenged.

VANTAGE POINT Still Far From The Dream

by Ron Daniels

As I traveled throughout the country last week speaking at Martin Luther King Day Celebrations from Baltimore to Wichita, Kansas, to Oklahoma City, I was impressed with peoples willingness and eagerness to see the Martin Luther King Holiday as an occasion to take a hard look at the state of the "Dream" nearly twenty-one years after King's death.

As Ronald Reagan rides off into the sunset he boasts of having achieved peace abroad, and prosperity at home. As was generally the case with Reagan, he was totally out of touch with huge segments of reality. The reality of the Reagan years has been prosperity for some and misery for many. For far too many, Reaganism, conservatism, and neo-racism has meant the dream deferred in the face of a persistent nightmare.

In America today, the obscene reality is that the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. There are now 3-6 million homeless in America; 38 million have no health insurance; according to an article in the Portland Oregonian, 30 million Americans are completely illiterate (cannot read or write at all), while another 30 million Americans are classified as functional illiterates (cannot read or write well enough to fill out a job application or take an aptitude test). Meanwhile the government spends .55 of each tax dollar on the military, but only .02 on education. Homeless shelters are forced to turn people away, soup kitchens and hunger programs are being swamped, and beggars abound on the streets of America's major urban centers.

African-Americans continue to suffer the most. To be sure the Black upper class and middle class has grown dramatically, but so has the urban and rural "ghetto class." Consider the following facts as provided by the Washington, D.C. based center on Budget and Policy Priorities:

In 1987 33% of African-Americans still lived in poverty (an increase of 700,000 over 1986).

The typical African-American family has an income that is only 56.1% of the amount earned by the typical

white family. (18,098 for Blacks and 32,274 for whites). This is the lowest ratio of Black to white income since 1967.

1 of 2 Black children is born in poverty, 1 of 3 Black senior citizens lives in poverty, and 1 of 3 Black women (ages 18-55) live in poverty.

One of the most startling facts is the growing gap between the upper and middleclass in the Black community and the Black poor. While some Black people are living better than ever before, the Black poor are catching more hell than ever before. The number of African-Americans with incomes that are 50% below the poverty line (4,528.00 for a family of 3 in 1987) increased by 69% since 1978. While the average income for the top 1/5 of African-Americans actually increased by 3,000.00 a year between 1978 and 1987, the income for the bottom 1/5 fell by 24% between 1978 and 1988 from \$5,022.00 in 1978 to 3,837.00 in 1988. Even in the African-American community the rich are getting richer while the poor are getting poorer. Can you imagine living on an income of \$3,837.00?

The grinding poverty which affects millions of African-Americans is breeding crime and violence in our communities. America's jails are overflowing with African-American, third world and poor people. Reaganism has meant increased affluence for the few who are very rich and more prisons and prisoners for the most desperately impoverished in our society.

The sketching of this nightmare, more than two decades after King's death, is not intended to merely depict gloom and doom, but to force us to face reality. Until the least of us is free and prosperous than none of us can safely be free and prosperous. As Dr. King warned us, injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. Those of us who have, had better make plans to use our human and material resources to elevate the have nots among us. We must organize to help ourselves and organize to force America to deliver on the promise of the American Dream for all of her citizens. Otherwise the nightmare which now affects the so called "under class" is destined to deservedly overwhelm us all!

To Be Equal National Service Idea Picks Up Support

by John E. Jacob

Sometimes it takes a while for good ideas to gain ground. An example is the concept of a National Youth Service Corps, which would enlist young people for a period of community service.

During the last session of Congress, no less than nine bills were introduced to establish some form of youth service program.

George Bush called for more volunteer activity during his campaign for the presidency, and endorsed a form of a national youth service program.

The Democratic Leadership Council proposed a citizen corps to serve in schools, hospitals, day care programs, and other community institutions, including the military, upon completion of service, participants would get lump-sum payments to be applied to job training, higher education, or down payment on a house.

In recent years, about 60 state and local youth service programs have been launched, providing service opportunities for some 60,000 young people.

And public opinion polls show increasing support for the idea. Not surprising, since a youth service corps would be a creative way to tackle at least three big problems at once.

First, it would help to alleviate the terrible shortage of necessary public services.

Understaffed hospitals need volunteers to help tend the sick. Schools need volunteers to tutor children and for after-school programs that deal with the problem of latch-key kids. Police, fire, transportation, and other local services could use extra help. Volunteers are needed to help protect the environment, as they are doing in California, which has a youth conservation corps.

Along The Color Line Unequal Medical Care

by Dr. Manning Marable

To be Black, Hispanic, poor or unemployed in America means, in part, an unequal access to basic resources. The poor and jobless don't have decent housing or quality education. Our social policies are designed to perpetuate economic inequality by preserving differences in the health, education and physical welfare of classes and racial groupings within the social order.

Part of the reason for this is simply racism. For example, researchers at Harvard University recently found that a significantly higher proportion of whites who are treated at Massachusetts hospitals with heart problems undergo coronary bypass operations and cardiac catheterizations than do Blacks suffering from identical health problems. Similarly, Blacks are less likely than whites to be given kidney transplants, even when they have the same incomes and insurance coverage. Researchers disagree as to the reasons for differences between the races in patient care and treatment. But they are convinced that "the differences were not merely a function of diminished physician contact and lower disease recognition for blacks," because the differences occurred even among individuals hospitalized for severe heart problems.

Another recent study on medical care illustrates that despite advances in the facilities and treatment of many African-Americans in terms of health, that there are significant differences in the frequency of access to medical facilities between Blacks and whites. For instance, in 1986, 37 percent of all Blacks surveyed had not visited a doctor in more than a year. The average number of visits to a doctor by whites is 4.4 per year, vs. only 3.4 per year for African-Americans. Nearly five in six whites surveyed received regular blood pressure checks, while about one in three Blacks surveyed had not had annual blood pressure checks.

Because we don't have a comprehensive, national health care policy,

And the military, facing a future shortage of recruits, would also benefit as youngsters could choose to serve in the armed forces instead of in a community program. That's the way some other countries operate--Germany's national service plan centers on the military, with civilian service options as an alternative.

A second problem a National Youth Service Corps could help solve is the decline of community spirit in this age of greed. Too many young people don't understand they are part of a wider society and have responsibilities to their communities. A service corps would enhance the tried-and-true values of service to others and participation in civic life.

A third area where the concept would be important is in providing opportunities for young people who are poor, minority, and who lack education and skills.

National service should include training and education components. Such a structured program with meaningful work assignments would help disadvantaged young people.

Volunteers would get a small stipend, with a G.I.-Bill type of benefit for those who complete their service, enabling them to go on to college or technical training programs.

And a broadly based program that enlists young people for volunteer service would help them to mature and foster social responsibility and racial and class integration.

So the concept has a lot going for it. It would counter the yuppie mentality of greed while providing real opportunities for disadvantaged youngsters to make a fresh start in their lives. And it would provide the people-power necessary to build a strong base of community-centered social services, while releasing the enormous energies and idealism of our young in service of the broader community. This is an idea whose time has come.

the United States fails to support concept of a medical "safety net" for millions of nonwhites, the poor and lower income people. In the void of a national health insurance system, the demands of the marketplace dictate the medical treatment for millions of people even outside of the poverty level. Doctors tend to go into subfields of medicine in which their financial compensation will be high, and the risks from being sued are reasonably low. Rural areas have a difficult time attracting dentists and physicians, because medical professionals don't earn enough money to pay off their loans or live in a comfortable lifestyle.

In some instances, the increase of certain medical procedures reflects the desire for increased profits. Back in 1975, for example, the rate of Caesarean section operations among live births was 10.4 percent. Ten years later, the percentage of Caesareans rose 22.7 percent. Today, it is 24.4 percent, nearly one out of four births. Medical doctors note that there is no medical reason why the number of Caesarians should have jumped so dramatically in so short a time. But Caesarians are more cost effective; hospitals state. They avoid the long hours of waiting involved in many vaginal births, and the inconvenience of night deliveries. More to the point, vaginal births now cost about \$2,900; Caesarean births cost anywhere from about \$5,000 to \$7,000. This economic fact alone raises the question of whether the medical interests of women and children are being served when the market is the basis for health decisions.

The Department of Black Studies at Ohio State University is planning a national conference on "The Health Issues Crisis and the Black Community," to be held on May 5 and 6, 1989. A central part of the agenda for Black political empowerment must be to promote greater awareness of health care issues, and strategies to reduce the medical inequality by race and class.

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