

EDITORIAL / OPINION

THE HOWARD STUDENT REVOLT: A GENERATION DISCOVERING ITS MISSION

For sometime now something has been stirring in the air: A new sense of urgency about the African-American conditions; in the face of drugs, crime, violence, and even the good life, an expectation that life could be, indeed must be better for all African-Americans; a new demand for self-respect; a new awakening after countless racial attacks in cities across America and racial flare-ups on college campuses, to the reality that racism is alive and thriving in America; Willie Horton being rubbed in our faces; affirmative action being set aside by the Supreme Court: David Duke, a Klansman elected to public office, Lee Atwater was slipped onto the Board of Directors of Howard University. It was time, past time to act. Howard University students rose in rebellion. Hope had been reborn!

"Each generation must out of relative obscurity discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it". This was the challenge set forth by Frantz Fanon, the Black Algerian revolutionary who became a prime theoretician of anti-colonial struggles and liberation movements in the 60s. The "movement" in America for African-American liberation took inspiration from Fanon's writings as a young generation hammered at the walls of racism, segregation, racial oppression and domestic colonialism.

As the Black Power movement exploded onto the stage in the mid-sixties African-American students at Cornell University, Jackson State, Duke University, Columbia, Kent State, and a host of other colleges and universities seized buildings or staged strikes demanding that institutions of higher learning learn to be responsive to the needs of African-Americans and Third World students. In launching these courageous protests these students stepped into the path blazed by students who sparked the civil-rights revolution with set-in demonstrations in Greensboro, Oklahoma City, and a multitude of cities across the south. In Little Rock, Arkansas, nine high school students braved hostile mob to desegregate Central High School.

Students in the fifties and sixties discovered their mission and fulfilled it. In the seventies a great lull seemed to overtake the "movement". Those of us who taught on college campuses use to lament the fact that students in the seventies seemed oblivious to the movement, to purpose to a sense of mission as it related to the liberation of African people in America and the world. More often than not parents had cautioned their sons and daughters not to mess with that "Black stuff" in college. That is not to say that Black activism died completely, but as a dominant force Black consciousness, Black Power, and Pan-Africanism receded in the fact of assimilation. (the wane syndrome), and individualism, (do your own thing). It was a big, lull that seemed to be put African-Americans back to sleep.

In the latter half of the eighties, however, many observers began to detect a new rising tide of self-affirmation and militancy. In recent years a variety of influences seemed to be converging to fuel rising aspirations and expectations among African-American young people. The rhythm and rhyme of rap music turned from the meaningless to the meaningful as groups like Public Enemy, and the Stetasonics found the sharp cutting edge of message music. The protest lyrics of Raggae have blew in from the Caribbean and with it a whole new fascination with our culture. In the sixties we wore tiki around our necks. Today more and more the young bloods are wearing leather medallions with the red, black and green of Africa and the red, yellow and green of the Caribbean. Spike Lee calls himself a "nationalist with a camera and produces thought provoking movies. Jesse Jackson challenged for the presidency two times. And Tracy Chapman is "Talkin Bout a Revolution" Malcolm X is on the rise again!

Out of relative obscurity, a young generation is apparently discovering its mission. The March 3 student revolt at Howard University may well be a watershed event signaling a renewed determination of young African-Americans to join in the spirit of their predecessors and their contemporaries in south African, Nambia, and Caribbean to build a new people, a new nation and a new world.

CONTINUING CRISIS IN MIAMI

by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

Most of the world has become aware of the deep racial problems and divisions that plague the city of Miami, Florida. The recent documented cases of racially-motivated police brutality against African Americans in this city only serve as a backdrop for the growing racial tensions.

Aesthetically, Miami is a beautiful city with much promise for the future. Yet, behind the gloss is a multi-racial community that lacks the will to forthrightly address fundamental social, political, and economic issues. Now that Miami is experiencing a large influx of Central American refugees, racial hostilities appear to be increasing to a crisis stage.

The New York Times recently revealed in a report that the educational system of Dade County where Miami is situated, also is not prepared to handle the more than five hundred immigrant children coming to Miami per month. Most of them speak Spanish. Ironically, there are now renewed calls for "English Only" legislation that would require that English be the mandatory language of local school systems.

Dr. Michael M. Krop, Chairman of the Dade County School Board has appealed to the President because "Bush says he wants to be the Education President". Yet, the Federal Government is now in the process of making new budget cuts from programs designed to support local school systems like the one in Miami.

We are very concerned about the perceived tensions between the African American and Hispanic American communities in Miami as a result of the social and economic implications of the rise in the local immigrant population. Strategically the African American and Hispanic American communities should unite in a common struggle for empowerment. The future of Miami does not have to be a future of divisive racial confrontations. But, the handwriting is surely on the wall, and the necessity for unity and joint action has never been more urgent.

In fact, Miami will serve as a national barometer on the future of race relations in the United States. The "powers that be" in the Anglo-American community should not wait for the situation to explode. The extent to which those in power are willing to share with those who are powerless is the extent to which a basis for dialogue and corrective action can be initiated.

It appears that the Bush Administration will not rush in and offer solutions for the acute problems facing this city. Thus, local leadership across the lines of race and class will have to emerge to ensure the kind of social and political change necessary for empowerment and development of all of the communities of Miami, particularly those communities that have historically been oppressed and exploited.

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SHAME! SHAME! SHAME! Another Day of Infamy in the City of Roses

by Stephen E. McPherson, Special Correspondent

Portland, the City of Roses, is said to be the most livable place in the United States, but for whom? Once more the vicious venom of racism has been vented on the embattled African American community. The editor and chief architect of a yellow journalistic rag is scheduled to be honored for her dubious contribution to the lower Northeast sector of the town. The added insult to this affront is the fact that she was nominated to this questionable honor by the parson of St. Andrews Roman Catholic Church which is located within the heart of the community where the nominee casts aspersions upon its citizens with impunity. The good pastor offered his nomination with the complete knowledge of the scurrilous piece of rubbish the nominee publishes every month. He ignored that fact with the observation that one thing has nothing to do with the other. Such an attitude is tantamount to saying that the villains who appended a taunting derision to the crucifix two millennia ago were only a mischievous bunch of over exuberant youths bent on displaying a little humor. One can only assume that the progenitor of this misguided nomination has remained so cloistered within a monastery that he is out of touch with reality or that even a man of the cloth can harbor a malevolent second agenda. It is little wonder the hierarchy of his church precluded its ministers from engaging in political activity. One cannot escape the fact that such a nomination has serious political overtones.

The entire process denigrates the award to the extent that it no longer can be taken as a serious representation of an acceptable community effort. More distressing, however, is the fact that unmitigated racism now enjoys a certain amount of respectability, even from the august sanctuary of the church. It is, indeed, very curious to observe that two of the honorees are persons from the Northeast community who have made a very serious commitment to resolving the myriad problems that affect that sector. It also is interesting to note that one of the honorees is associated with the St. Andrew Legal Clinic located just across the street from the Roman Catholic Parish but remains completely independent of its administration.

Finally, the management of station KOIN is not entirely devoid of blame in this matter. They do, indeed, have a moral and legal responsibility as set forth under the rules of the Federal Communications Commission in this matter. It does not suffice to indicate that the awards resulted from the decisions of two misguided and anonymous miscreants. The decision making process is always a difficult task which is an exercise in expressing good judgement. It is certainly cowardly to blame a mistake of this magnitude on some faceless person when one is not endowed by example or experience with the fortitude to speak out against any injustice. There is little doubt that the publication the nominee authors and distributes has done irreparable harm to a significant segment of the African American Community. Giving an award in that category to such a person only confirms the ominous message that has emanated recently from those persons who once were friends. It is now abundantly clear that the decision makers no longer consider the aspirations and concerns of the African American community to be an important factor in their deliberations. The public urgently needs to demand that persons in positions of leadership know exactly what position KOIN and public officials assume with regard to racism of any type. It would be in the best interest of preserving public harmony and human understanding to suspend all Jefferson awards for the current year.

INDEPENDENT COALITION POLITICS

A new, independent coalition is emerging in New York City, Still embryonic, but growing every day, this coming together of key activists of organized labor, students and the Black and Latino communities is out to challenge not only the bi-partisan political establishment, its corporate patrons and their flunkies in the unions and bureaucracies, but the phony reformers and pseudo-professionals who have stood in the way of the decade-long movement to dump Mayor Ed Koch. The union-busting, anti-poor, racist bully and loudmouth, a Democrat who for 12 years has occupied the mayor's residence on Gracie Square at the pleasure of the real estate developers and the banking industry, is running for an unprecedented fourth term.

The coalition that is now taking shape in New York is similar to the one which helped Harold Washington mount his successful electoral challenge to the white supremacist Democratic Party machine in Chicago. But there is one important difference between them: New York's emerging coalition is independent to the very core!

That does not mean that we won't support progressive Democrats running for political office, when and where they deserve our support. It does mean that we can't rely on the Democratic Party for our empowerment.

That is why the leaders of New York's newly emerging coalition--such as Georgianna Johnson, the president of Local 1199, which represents 80,000 health and hospital workers, most of them Black and Puerto Rican women, and Ali al-Rahman, president of the Guardians Association in the Department of Corrections, the organization of Black police officers who work in the city's jails--have endorsed my "Two Roads Are Better Than One" plan in New York City's mayoral race. It means supporting Manhattan Borough President David Dinkins in his supporting Manhattan Borough President David Dinkins in his bid for the Democratic Party's nomination and then, if he does not win the primary, backing my independent candidacy for mayor in the general election.

I am eager to build a coalitional slate of real independents who between now and November will use the "inside-outside" tactic to get candidates elected to public office. This means people candidate who will run in the Democratic Party primary for citywide and local offices to beat back Koch's cronies on their own turf and then--whether they win or lose the primary--will run on the independent New Alliance Party line in the general election. That will give us two chances to elect some people's candidates who can go to the borough halls and down to City Hall and function on our behalf as watchdogs on New York's scandalously corrupt and anti-people administration.

Georgianna Johnson, Ali al-Rahman and I are among the voices of the emerging coalition that is coming together in New York to take back the unions, to take back the communities, to take back the city. An only an independent political movement--a Black-led and multi-racial people's movement can do it! Because what we're taking back is politics, what we're taking back is power, from those who took it from us--the Democratic Party, disguised as the party of the people, in cahoots with the Republican Party, which doesn't even bother to disguise the fact that it is the enemy of the people.

Dr. Lenora Fulani is the national chairperson of the New Alliance Party and a practicing Social Therapist in Harlem. She can be contacted at the New Alliance Party, 2032 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10027 and at (212) 996-4700.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION'S FUTURE by John E. Jacob

Confusion still reigns after the Supreme Court's decision knocking down Richmond, Virginia's minority setaside program. Opinions differ about whether that ruling kills affirmative action or whether it leaves room for the continued existence of such programs.

And everyone is waiting for the Court to drop the other shoe -- upcoming cases will affect affirmative action in local government hiring and in private employer's promotions.

To take the bright side first, the Richmond decision need not choke off minority setaside programs of local governments. Most local programs are based on goals, not the kind of quotas Richmond wrote into its law.

The judges also struck down the Richmond law because the city did not prove setasides necessary to remedy past discrimination. In most places, such documentation is available and state and local governments should be compiling statistics and other evidence of past discrimination to defend their present setaside programs.

A lot will turn on what the Court ultimately decides is adequate evidence of discrimination and what appropriate remedies will be acceptable. Some judges have the peculiar notion that only specific individuals who had been discriminated against -- and who can prove it -- should be given preference in a setaside or an affirmative action program.

That tells us more about judicial theories than about reality in our America. Discrimination against African Americans is easily proven and richly documented. We were discriminated against, however, as a group and on the basis of group affiliation, not as individuals. Group discrimination leading to group disadvantage requires group remedies.

Whether that logic can penetrate the ideologues on today's federal courts is doubtful, and that means the future of affirmative action could be in peril.

Some upcoming cases before the Supreme Court will determine whether its narrower interpretation of the constitutionality of racial preference programs is tightened into a noose that murders affirmative action, or whether guidelines will be refined to the point where such programs will continue.

One case involves a challenge to a court-ordered hiring quota for firemen. Another will decide whether statistical evidence of low minority hiring and promotion practices.


Another big pending case will find the Justices reviewing the 1976 Runyon decision that allowed damages in private discrimination cases. And the lower courts have numerous other cases challenging affirmative action and minority setaside programs.

So the next several months will be crucial for the future of African Americans' efforts to close the economic gap and achieve opportunities long denied them.

Affirmative action is an essential mechanism to overcome discrimination and its effects. The Supreme Court's new majority seems to be acting as if we are a color-blind society with no need to make special efforts to overcome past denial of constitutional rights.

As Justice Thurgood Marshall wrote in his dissent in the Richmond case, the majority is "constitutionalizing its wishful thinking." It is applying the same standards and tests to efforts to overcome discrimination's effects as it did to state-imposed segregation.


It may be up to the Congress and the Administration to frame a national response to this runaway Court, with legislation that frames a constitutionally acceptable affirmative action standard and shelters local government and private affirmative action standard programs from the courts that are trying to roll the clock back.



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