

EDITORIAL / OPINION

Vantage point

By Ron Daniels

BLACK POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT THE NEED FOR PRINCIPLES, PROCESS AND AGENDAS

The quest for political empowerment by the African-American community should occur within the framework of a process which involves the broadest possible spectrum of participation and input from the various organizations, agencies and religious institutions within the African-American community. The first question which this process must address, is political empowerment for what? This question must always precede all others. It deals with the basic question of what principles, goals and objectives will guide our political endeavors at the local, state, national and international level.

This is precisely why an African-American or Black Agenda should be viewed as an indispensable component of the process of African-American empowerment. For in the final analysis, we must never seek power for power's sake. The purpose for struggling to empower ourselves is to achieve the goals which we aspire to based on principles which are consistent with the culture and history of our people. This is why despite its shortcomings, the recent African-American Summit in New Orleans was significant. The Summit challenged African-Americans to discuss our future, our ideological and political principles, our goals and the strategies required for our survival and development as a people. In short, an African-American Agenda.

Without a Black Agenda we have no way of measuring our progress and no adequate means by which to evaluate those who claim to be working to advance our cause, Black or white. Without a Black Agenda the masses of our people are vulnerable to opportunism and exploitation. "If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there".

The 1972 Gary Black Political Convention established a model for the development of Black Agendas. The Gary Black Agenda was designed to deal with two basic questions. First what are the goals and priorities of African-Americans in terms of public policy? That is to say, what is it that we hope to achieve through governmental action. Secondly and equally important, the Gary Agenda focused attention on what we as African-American should do utilizing our own human and material resources to advance our interest and achieve our goals. The categories of concerns included employment, economic development, health and human services, education, cultural development, rural development and international policy.

Once adopted the mission was to use the Black Agenda as a basis and



guide for political and programmatic action. In the electoral political arena, those who held public office as well as those aspiring to public office at all levels were to be evaluated in terms of how they measured up in each category of the Black Agenda. The idea was that those who scored high on the Black Agenda were worthy of our support and votes. Those who did not score high on the Black Agenda were not worthy of our support or votes whether they were Black or white.

Unfortunately in far too many instances Black politics has moved away from principles, goals and process to an emphasis on personality, individual self-interest and self-aggrandizement. Too many Black elected officials, for example, are not anchored in their communities and fail to function with a developed Black Agenda as their guide. Hence they often fail to adequately represent the interests of the African-American community. Without a solid community based foundation and a Black Agenda which reflects the communities' needs, Black politics can degenerate into a vulgar game of power for power sake and a shameless exercise in self-advancement at the expense of the community. A majority of Black elected officials, however, do try to perform in the best interest of the community. The problem is that the process and systems to inform elected officials of the community will be either non-existent or woefully inadequate.

There is an urgent need to return to the basics. African-American summits, Black political conventions or Black agenda conferences need to take place in every village, town, city and state in America. Once agendas are adopted, then representative accountability structures should be organized to monitor the performance of organizations and agencies and elected and non-elected leaders so as to safeguard forward progress around issues within the Black agenda. There is no substitute for principles, process and systems. They check agomania, cult of personality and megalomania.

For a period of time after the Gary Convention local, state and national political conventions and agenda conferences were common place. For some reason we lapsed into complacency. African-American communities need to get back into the habit again. Hopefully the New Orleans Summit will serve as a spark to re-ignite the process of refocusing on principles, goals, agendas and organized structures as a vital elements of our quest for political empowerment.

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

"TODAY'S CHILD, TOMORROW'S HOPE": SOUTHERN AFRICA TELETHON

by Benjamin R. Chavis, Jr.

The Coalition for a Free Africa, Inc. (CFA) is to be congratulated for their successful efforts in planning the first international television telethon to be produced by African Americans to raise funds to support and benefit the struggle in southern Africa. The telethon will be aired on Black Entertainment Television (BET) on Sunday, June 25, 1989, from 5:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m. EST. We support this effort wholeheartedly and we encourage all Americans to view this important telethon and to pledge support.

The Coalition for a Free Africa is a public charity co-chaired by Solar Records' President, Dick Griffith, and California Assemblywoman Maxine Waters. Griffith and Waters have been long time supporters of the cause of freedom and justice in southern Africa. We believe that this type of telethon concretizes the meaning of solidarity. The funds raised through this effort is a positive step forward not only for the anti-apartheid movement in the United States but also for the African American community in particular as a means of increasing the relationship between the supporters of freedom here and in Africa. This will also be a bold example of how the latest in telecommunications technology can be and should be used to create positive images and impact.

Too often the established media has negatively stereotyped the plight of the situation in Africa as well as the situation here in the United States. Nothing will be more positive and constructive than seeing millions of persons throughout the United States and other parts of the world joining together to support this telethon.

According to the Coalition for a Free Africa the purpose of the telethon is three-fold: 1) To wage a national education campaign around the morally repugnant system of apartheid and its devastating impact on the entire southern Africa region; 2) To mobilize the African American community and to challenge the entire family of humankind to share its resources with the children of Southern Africa and; and 3) To raise substantial funds for nutrition, education and health projects for the children of southern Africa.

At a time when African Americans spend over \$200 billion annually in the United States, financially supporting this telethon would be a significant act toward re-directing the spending patterns of the African American community.

The theme of this First Annual Southern Africa Benefit Telethon is "Today's Child, Tomorrow's Hope. A multi-racial lineup of internationally-acclaimed stars and entertainers have already indicated their willingness to perform for the telethon and to support projects helping our sisters and brothers in southern Africa. Among the headliners are Stevie Wonder, Chaka Khan, Sheena Easton, Al Jarreau, Holly Robinson, Debbie Allen, Roy Ayers, Atlantic Starr, Sheryl Lee Ralph, Third World, Casey Kasom, and numerous others. Black Entertainment Television increasingly is becoming a viable form for newsworthy and noteworthy events in addition to providing excellent musical entertainment. The joint efforts of many national organizations along with the hard work of the producers and the Coalition for a Free Africa are a testament to creative pooling of resources for a worthy cause.

Yes, today's children are our hope and future. In Africa and particularly in southern Africa, children are crying out for help and for freedom and for peace. Our future will be dependent upon how well we respond individually and collectively to the cries of these children because their future is our future.

ALBERTA STREET FESTIVAL

July 8
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Information Line
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AIDS CRISIS MOUNTS

by John E. Jacob

America has a strange ability to panic about an issue, recognize it as a crisis demanding action -- and then ignore it.

The AIDS epidemic is a case in point. The Public's concern about AIDS has tailed off just as the disease's impact is hitting harder.

I have to wonder if a big reason is the feeling that AIDS is now a problem primarily afflicting racial minorities -- and therefore, a problem the majority community can afford to ignore.

As AIDS spread among minority drug abusers, many people warned that the urgency surrounding the epidemic would decline, and that is precisely what has happened.

In fact, AIDS crosses race, gender and class lines. Perhaps the fastest growing group of AIDS victims are women and children born with the HIV infection.

No one can afford to smugly dismiss the threat to society at large because we are all at risk -- either directly from the infection or from breakdowns in health care and social services stressed by the overwhelming needs of the victims.

The AIDS epidemic has exposed the weaknesses of our social support structures -- the severe deficiencies in health care, substance abuse treatment, and housing, as well as the severe shortages of trained health care personnel and social service facilities.

Despite warnings of the potentially large demands on social services caused by AIDS, little has been done to expand and upgrade those services and make them available to all.

Often, resources have been so limited that only terminal AIDS pa-

tients get help, while people who have not developed symptoms or have AIDS-related illnesses that stop short of being defined as AIDS cases, do not have access to help.

In some cities, public hospitals are the first line of treatment for AIDS, when alternative forms of care would be more appropriate and would free hospital resources for care of the non-AIDS-related sick.

Nowhere is that shortsightedness more striking than in the refusal to expand drug treatment services. As the disease spreads among intravenous drug users, more and more people seek admission to programs that help them kick their drug habit.

But despite all the rhetoric about wars on drugs, treatment centers are understaffed and underfunded.

Some big-city clinics have backlogs that require waits of 15 months for admission. By the time an applicant is finally admitted it is often too late to prevent infection with the HIV virus.

The federal government should take the lead in a nationwide drug treatment and rehabilitation effort. Appointing "drug czars," beefing up law enforcement, and condemning foreign drug exporters won't be as effective as ensuring that every drug abuser has access to treatment that enables him or her to become drug-free.

Alternative AIDS-care facilities need to be established and funded, to relieve the pressure on the health care system and to ensure dignified treatment and hospice facilities.

And resources for treatment, services and education must be made available to local community based groups who are the only ones that can make a dent in this problem.

WE WILL PROTECT OUR OWN!

The cops are out to kill another Black man. This time we're going to stop them. The young brother's name is Adam Abdul-Hakeem (formerly Larry Davis). The cops tried to get him once before, in October of 1986, when they came gunning for him at his sister's apartment in the South Bronx.

But Adam shot back, and got away. Two Bronx juries have already acquitted him--one on a quadruple homicide charge and the other on charges of attempted murder; they knew the cops were lying when they said they had come to "question" him; they believed Adam was telling the truth when he testified that for years crooked cops have been recruiting poor young Blacks and Puerto Ricans to do their dirty work for them, and that the police who came to his sister's house were there to kill him.

On Friday night of the Memorial Day weekend Adam was secretly moved out of the men's prison on Rikers Island in New York City to the Downstate Correctional Facility, the state prison in Fishkill, New York about 100 miles north. The Department of Corrections' explanation for the sudden transfer--which neither his attorneys nor any of his family had been informed about-- was that Adam's next scheduled court date is six weeks from now, and they want to alleviate the overcrowded conditions on Rikers. Now, you know that's a lie!

Along with Adam, his mother Mary Davis, and his attorneys, I was deeply concerned that the Fishkill guards--thinking that no one knew where Adam was--would take advantage of the long holiday weekend to stage an "accident" or to provoke a situation ending up in Adam's death.

The fear that Adam might be killed in prison by vengeful guards is not exaggerated. New York's prisons--like similar facilities around the country--are in fact significant population centers whose inhabitants, most of them Blacks, Puerto Ricans, and other people of color, are routinely subjected to the violation of their civil and human rights. The prisons are run as the private domains of the wardens, who allow the guards free rein; racist violence, dehumanization and sadism are the norm.

The uprising at Attica State Prison nearly two decades ago was not a "rumble" conducted by a few dissatisfied men in a bad mood; it was a profound demand for human dignity, made by men who would rather have died than continue to live under such conditions. There has not been any substantial improvement in those conditions since then.

In such an environment, anything goes--including murder. Brother George Jackson, murdered in cold blood by Soledad prison guards in 1971, was perhaps the most famous victim of this prison policy. There are thousands more--not so well known--who have been assassinated behind prison walls. So when Adam Abdul-Hakeem issues a cry for help, saying his life is in danger, he and we have every reason to fear the worst.

That is why, as the chairperson of the multi-racial, broad-based Adam Abdul-Hakeem Coalition to save our Youth, I had a leaflet produced calling on the community to help save Adam's life by contacting every major newspaper, radio and television station in New York to alert them to the situation.

On Memorial Day, I went to Fishkill with Mrs. Davis. I wanted to make it clear to Adam, and to the prison officials and guards as well, that some of us were not on vacation! I wanted them to know that we were watching them.

And I wanted Adam to know that he wasn't alone. He's very strong, and very smart. He's committed to taking on this fight in a big way--not just to save himself, but to save the young people of this city, this state and this country. But prison is a very lonely and frightening place to be, especially when you're surrounded by Black-hating, brutal cops who long to see you dead and buried.

For the time being, Adam's life has been saved. Within hours after the Coalition's leaflet was distributed, assignment editors were being inundated with many hundreds of phone calls from the community demanding coverage of the Adam Abdul-Hakeem story. The resultant glare of publicity culminated in a ruling by a New York State Supreme Court judge that Adam be returned to New York immediately and sent to Bellevue Hospital for treatment. He is in the hospital now.

But Adam is still in danger. He has been beaten again by guards since coming back to New York City. The cops are out to protect their own--the drug running hoodlums in police uniform who operate out of the 44th Precinct. And they're desperate: if Adam won't keep quiet, they are determined to shut him up. If they can't intimidate or beat this brave young brother into silence, they'll murder him.

We are equally determined to protect our own--the Black and Puerto Rican Children who are being murdered every day--shot down by trigger-happy cops on a rampage, or dying slowly of poverty, drug addiction and despair. We are going to save our youth, no matter whose toes get stepped on. And the professional politicians who cry crocodile tears over the "drug problem" but look the other way when names are named had better look out.

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.

"ANTI-BLACK BLACKS" abort progress

By A. Wali Muhammad

In the current rising tide of newspaper ink devoted to international coverage, as usual, Black people and nations either take a back seat or are projected in the worst light. Thus, the domestic coverage of the quasi-governmental news media is repeated in international coverage (The networks, newspapers, magazines, etc. would reject the label "quasi-governmental," but if it quacks like a duck, it's a duck).

Thus, the pimps, prostitutes and drug pushers on U.S. television (which by the way is viewed all over the world through satellite transmissions and cable networks), or the more positive image of basketball players, boxers or musicians, translates in international coverage into depictions of African and Caribbean nations as petty dictatorships and tyrannies, impoverished, bankrupt begging debtor nations, cesspools of human misery, in need of the "Great White Father," the U.S., to guide them into modernity. Or, like the sports and entertainment images, as vast naturally endowed amusement parks, complete with home grown servants, chauffeurs, and sex partners-for-hire.

Although the picture of many African and Caribbean Nations, as well as many Central and South American nations, inhabited primarily or in large part by Black people, such as

Brazil and Panama, is not a rosy one, the root of the current condition of these nations is totally ignored. The savaged decimation of these dark-skinned peoples and their nation-states resulting from American and European "wilding," also called imperialist expansion and colonialism, laid the basis for the current "under-development" as Caribbean scholar Walter Rodney stated in his book, "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa."

In the tiny island nation of Dominica, a mountainous tropical paradise in the Caribbean between Guadalupe and Martinique, this inferiority complex evidenced itself when the Prime Minister, Eugenia Charles, her strings pulled by "massa" Reagan in Washington, called in 1983 for the invasion of Grenada, a neighbor island. What a sight, the elderly Black woman standing at a press conference at the side of cowboy Ronald, his gun notched with the death of Blacks all the way back to his governorship.

On May 21, nearly 3,000 Dominicans gathered this year in the mountainous village of Salisbury for an African Liberation Day (ALD) rally to decry Charles, and others like her ruling the island at the dictates of U.S. policy, as "anti-Black-Blacks," as the opposition leader branded her. (I tried to file a report on the activities from Dominica with the Sheridan Broadcasting Network, a national black radio network. They said they would "pass" on the story. Not "pass on," but "pass." Isn't that special?)

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