

EDITORIAL / OPINION

To Be Equal

Focusing On Civil Rights

By John E. Jacob

President Bush has on numerous occasions insisted that he will not turn his back on the cause of civil rights. He can make good on that pledge in a number of ways. He can use the bully pulpit of the presidency to call the nation's attention to the unfinished business of civil rights.

Our national goal should be racial parity. The President should order his Cabinet to prepare a parity report card that annually lets us all know what progress has been made toward parity.

On civil rights issues, as opposed to the economic and social issues at the core of the thrust to parity, the Department of Justice needs to be far more supportive. In recent years, the Department was busier trying to overturn settled civil rights law than it was in helping to enforce the laws against discrimination.

Another important area is in federal appointments, demonstrating assuring top Administration policy-making jobs go to minority candidates of proven competence, rather than to political ideologues who cater to the far right.

As judicial openings come up, the President must break with the recent practice of stocking the federal courts with judges indifferent to efforts to remedy discrimination. Too many presidents have found that appointing judges from the far right wing of the political spectrum is an easy, cheap way to curry favor with conservative legislators. The result is a federal judiciary that has changed from being a staunch protector of measures to advance civil rights and minority opportunities into a judiciary bent on tearing away a body of civil rights law that took twenty years to build up. A further boost to the cause of civil rights can come from a revamped and reconstituted Civil Rights Commission.

It was created back in the 1950s and served to educate and inform Americans about civil rights issues. The Commission's studies and hearings were important factors in developing a national consensus behind civil rights progress.

But the Reagan Administration destroyed the Commission by politicizing it. The Reagan appointees were prisoners of ideology and their personal and political antics threw the Commission into disrepute.

Today, many people say the Commission should be allowed to die a natural death when its authorization ends this Fall.

Others say there's no longer any need for a Civil Rights Commission, because the situation has changed and it no longer has a purpose to serve.

That alone is the best argument for reconstituting the Civil Rights Commission on a new Basis, for there is a crying need for an effective government voice for racial progress.

Race relations in the U.S. have been a downward spiral for years, and people who should know better say we're now a color-blind society. That is in such glaring conflict with the reality of persistent African American discrimination and disadvantage, that it is apparent we need an independent Civil Rights Commission to educate the nation.

Any reauthorized Commission should be surrounded by safeguards against another political coup like the Reaganite assault that virtually destroyed it in the 1980s.

It should have a clear mission to gather facts and issue reports on civil rights conditions, interpreted broadly enough to include the real social and economic issues at the core of civil rights today.

Civil Rights Journal

Remember Yusef Hawkins

By Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

Racism in the United States continues to kill African Americans. For some this is a difficult reality to understand given the increasing multi-racial character of American society. But for the vast majority of thirty million African Americans throughout the United States, the consequences of racism resulting in brutality and death are all too familiar.

The senseless murder of young 16-year old Yusef Hawkins in the Bensonhurst section of Brooklyn, New York, is but the latest example of a society gone mad with racial hatred and bigotry. Yusef and three other African American youth were walking through the predominantly Italian-American neighborhood of Bensonhurst when thirty or more white youth attacked them with baseball bats and a gun. Yusef was fatally shot twice in the chest.

According to press accounts, Joseph Fama, 18-years old was the alleged trigger-man. Witnesses have confirmed that Fama in his rage shouted, "The hell with beating them up, forget the bats, I'm gonna shoot the nigger." Four shots were fired and two hit Yusef at close range. No society can afford to let this type of racist violence go unchallenged.

It is interesting to note that as of this writing, only five of the thirty white youth have been apprehended by the police and there is a question of whether or not any will be charged with murder. Whenever there is a tragedy like this, it is important for the system of justice to act expeditiously and fairly.

There are some who now say, "Well, this was just a case of mistaken identity because the white youth were actually looking for a young black who they thought was dating a neighborhood white girl and Yusef and the others happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time." Anyone who would attempt to excuse or to justify what happened only contributes to the continuation of this type of racial violence.

The fact is that Joseph Fama and his companions were set to lunge and to attack the first African American young male who would dare to violate what they perceived as their territory and their superiority. The issue is not mistaken identity, the issue is the mortality of racism in America, in particular it is the mortality of the African American community as a consequence of racism.

African American church leaders in New York were right in their immediate demonstrations, marches, and protests. Mayor Koch was wrong in criticizing church leaders for their activism concerning the Hawkins case. When will the white community rise up to protest these continuing acts of racist violence? The African American community cannot afford to wait because the names on the victims list continues to increase.

As we should remember Emmett Till, we all should remember the tragedy of Yusef Hawkins, and we should never forget how and why he died.

This Way For Black Empowerment The Independent Black Movement Must Get Itself Together!

By Dr. Lenora Fulani

With the pain of Michael Griffith's murder at the hands of a Howard Beach mob still fresh in our hearts, yet another young Black man has been cut down by a gang of racist thugs.

As many as 30 white men armed with bats lay in wait one recent August night for the young Blacks and Puerto Ricans they had been told were coming to a birthday party in the Bensonhurst section of Brooklyn. Sixteen year old Yusef Hawkins, an African American, happened to be in the neighborhood with friends to look at a used car. And that was enough, in this murderously racist society of ours, to get him shot to death.

As the mother of two Black children, I mourn with Yusef's parents. The hundreds of thousands of African American, Latino, Native American, Asian American and Jewish people who support the independent New Alliance Party that I chair are grieving with Yusef's parents, their family and friends, over the loss of another one of our sons. We, too, are enraged by the racist wilding that goes on, day in and day out, against our children--the lynch mob style violence perpetrated by barbarians in and out of police uniform that is implicitly sanctioned by the courts and the media and the politicians, including some of "our own."

What can we, the African American people of New York City, do at this time to make our grief and our rage a weapon in the war against racism? The leaders of the independent Black movement here in New York must put aside our differences, personal and political, and come together now in defense of the Black community. It will not be easy; we are deeply divided, mutually suspicious and accusing.

I have been charged, for example, with stealing money from the coalition to Save Our Youth, which I was asked to chair by Adam Abdul-Hakeem (formerly known as Larry Davis); he is the young Black man who along with Ricardo Burgos has been the target of a police vendetta ever since they stepped forward to expose that for years corrupt cops have been recruiting Black and Puerto Rican youth for the drug ring they operate in the city's poorest neighborhoods. I have also been accused of using the case itself to further my militantly pro-Black, progressive independent mayoral campaign.

It is not clear who has been making these charges. No one is claiming "credit" for the rumors, attacks, misinformation, and--in the case of the "missing money--straight out lies. Charges are being made, but no one is making them publicly. Stories are being reported, but no one is clear about the sources of the reporting. Now the political movement generated by the Memorial Day mobilization to save Adam Abdul-Hakeem's life, like the momentum built up earlier by the Days of Outrage to protest the Howard Beach murder and the rape and brutalization of Tawana Brawley, has dissipated.

The Black community is confused. Our people want to know who is telling the truth. My commitment to the community--like that of most of the other independent Black leaders--is unquestionable. Why can't we all work together? We who call ourselves leaders must take responsibility. But we surely cannot rule out the work of the FBI, which has a long and dishonorable history of fomenting divisions within the Black movement with the purpose of destroying independent Black political movement and, in particular, organization. That is why we must be very careful about condemning each other--very careful indeed.

Despite all that has happened, independent Black leaders have a very important job to do: the lives of our children are at stake. David Dinkins--the city's senior Black elected official--stands on the threshold of being elected New York's first African American mayor. It is the duty of independent Black leaders to put the full pressure of our combined strength on him so that he will be forced to stand up to the racists on behalf of our people. The Independent Black Movement Needs to Lean On David Dinkins.

We owe that to Yusef--and to all of our children.

"THE TWO FACES OF RACISM" Along The Color Line

by Dr. Manning Marable

Much has been written about the tragic, racially-motivated execution of sixteen year old Yusef K. Hawkins in the Bensonhurst neighborhood of Brooklyn. When Hawkins and several black friends visited the white neighborhood on 23 August to look at a used car, they were attacked by approximately ten white youths. Reportedly, the white youths were outraged that a local white woman was dating a Black man, and they were lying in wait for their victim. Armed with baseball bats, golf clubs and at least one gun, they were heard by witnesses saying before the shooting: "let's club the [expletive] nigger." Young Hawkins backed away from the confrontation, but was gunned down by two .32 caliber bullets.

Hawkins's murder triggered a deep outrage among the city's African American population for several reasons. Hawkins was only the latest of a series of Black victims of white violence in New York, a list which has included the Black men beaten and killed at Howard Beach, and the killing of Michael Stewart, Eleanor Bumpers and other Blacks by the police. When local activists Jitu Weusi, Reverend Herbert Daughtry and others called for a protest march to denounce the murder, they were told by New York Mayor Ed Koch that they had no right to protest in the Bensonhurst area. On August 31, thousands participated in a mile-long protest march, which culminated in confrontation with police on Brooklyn Bridge. About ten police and scores of demonstrators were injured. On the same day, the suspected killer of Hawkins, Joseph Fama, pleaded not guilty to the crime.

The deeper reason for the level of anger among Black residents was the viciousness of the murder, and its random character. Hawkins was not engaging in any criminal activity. He was only inquiring about an automobile for a commercial transaction. The fact that he could be killed in cold blood told the city's 2.2 million African-Americans that they, too, could become victims of vigilante violence by white racists at any moment.

As in South Africa, Blacks had to fear for their personal safety if they walked through certain all-white districts.

A typical reaction was that of Devin S. Standard, a Black executive, in the New York Times. Despite Standard's education, white business associates, white girlfriend and Republican Party affiliations, "I am intrigued by the fact that apparently there are gangs of white people just waiting to kill me. What have I done?" Standard asked for an entire generation of young black men. "What have we African-Americans done that makes so many white people hate, fear and disdain us so much that they want to deprive us of our lives, liberty and pursuit of happiness? Do white people aspire to intern us all?"

Standard and millions of Black Americans under twenty five years of age have no personal memories of Jim Crow segregation, and were too young to participate in the Black Power movement. They have grown up in the era of Reaganism and the decline of the civil rights movement. Overt discrimination has given way to more subtle forms of racism. Because younger African-Americans believed the illusion of American democracy and equality for people of color, they were shocked and stunned by Hawkins's murder. They can't comprehend that Klan-style violence still exists today.

Vantage Point

By Ron Daniels

The Savings and Loan Bailout

African-Americans, minorities and poor people are always reminded about the value of hard work, thrift and management. Many conservative analysts, including some Black ones, blame the poor for their condition of impoverishment, contending that the poor mis-manage their resources, and rely too heavily on public handouts. Heaven forbid that a project or program aimed at helping the poor should have a deficit or a cost overrun. Conservatives would be quick to pounce on such an event as an example of the carelessness and ineptitude of Blacks, minorities and the poor. Requests by poor people for additional capital to salvage or bail-out much needed economic or social programs are regularly dismissed as irresponsible and unnecessary.

It is curious that red, white and blue flag waving super patriots are the first to rush to the public sector for some help, or should I say welfare assistance, when their enterprises are in jeopardy. For instance the federal government sponsored a multi-billion dollar bail-out for Chrysler Corporation with few questions asked. One of America's richest multi-nation Corporations had to be saved from financial difficulties which were caused by its own mis-calculations and its own mis-management. But of course we already said Chrysler is a rich corporation backed by some very wealthy people.

The savings and loan bail-out is the latest instance of the federal government being forced to save "respectable", and "responsible" financial institutions who just happen to have fallen on hard times in our booming economy. The huge savings and loan industry is plagued by a deficit which by some estimates is in excess of 200 billion dollars. The losses from hundreds of federally backed, government insured savings and loan banks are running in the range of 40 million dollars a day!

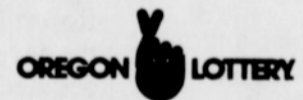
The fact of the matter is that large numbers of these savings and loans were hardly respectable or responsible. They were/are reckless. Indeed many of these saving and loans are grossly irresponsible because they choose to invest their monies in high risk get rich quick schemes abroad rather than invest dollars in America in general, and in distressed Black, minority and poor inner-city areas in particular. There is nothing within the government's policies and regulations which prevents this reckless behavior.

Hence savings and loans have a green light to pour billions into speculative ventures in foreign lands while depriving America of badly needed capital. Redlining in disparate, capital starved inner city communities is commonplace. In fact its even worse than that. Actually savings and loans, other banks and corporations are encouraged to invest abroad because taxes on profits raked in form foreign investments are less than taxes on profits made in the U.S.A. In other words corporations get a tax break for investing abroad. It is an incentive not to invest in America.

Well as fate would have it, vast numbers of the risky savings and loans investments overseas have not panned out. Indeed these investment have gone so badly that the defaults on a huge multi-billion dollar pool of loans pose a threat to the entire saving and loan industry and even signaled the possible crash of the U.S. economy. Obviously something had to be done. Good old respectable and responsible rich institutions, and rich individuals could not be allowed to go under. After all the result of their careless and reckless behavior could spell disaster for all of us.

The cruel hoax is that the savings and loans' mis-calculated, mis-invested, and ran into mis-fortune. Poor and working people had nothing to do with their shenanigans. Poor and working people were the victims of the savings and loans' redlining and non-investment in America. But guess who is going to have to pay the bill to bail-out the ailing savings and loan industry. You got it right, the government, the public, YOU and your tax dollars will rescue the savings and loan industry. This is like giving them a kind of back handed reward for their reckless, irresponsible, anti-American and anti-human behavior.

Something is terribly wrong in a nation that can routinely bail out ailing corporations and rich enterprises, but cannot find the resolve and resources to bail-out the multitude of poor and disadvantaged people in this land. It would appear that reverse Robinhood is the order of the day in America. It is an order that we must fight to change!



Get in on the Action...



Play Oregon Lottery's new Sports Action Game. Its exciting, its fun! Details at your Lottery Retailer. Enter this week to play and win!

Turn to page 4 for Official Program information on this week's Sports Action Game!

Sports Action is not associated with, sponsored by, or authorized by the National Football League.

Vigilante violence, police brutality and other forms of brutality are the most obvious face of American racism. But far more pervasive and influential is the second face of discrimination, institutional racism. Systemic racism exists within political, economic and social institutions. In electoral politics, it is expressed in New York by the policies and rhetoric of Mayor Ed Koch, who more than any other individual was responsible for creating the climate which led to Hawkins's murder. Mayoral candidate David Dinkins correctly observed that "the Mayor sets the tide and tone with respect to race relations." Koch was more than willing to feed the flames of racial bigotry in order to secure his reelection to office.

Institutional racism means that young African Americans have fewer opportunities to pursue a college degree today than in the early 1970s. The system would rather incarcerate the poor and undereducated, than to provide the programs necessary for productive lives. For example, "Black males total about 6 percent of the U.S. population. They represent only 3.5 percent of all college enrollments, but nearly 46 percent of the prison population.

PORTLAND OBSERVER

OREGON'S OLDEST AFRICAN-AMERICAN PUBLICATION
Established in 1970

Alfred L. Henderson/Publisher

Leon Harris/General Manager

Gary Ann Garnett
Business Manager

Joyce Washington
Sales/Marketing Director

PORTLAND OBSERVER
is published weekly by
Exie Publishing Company, Inc.
525 N.E. Killingsworth St.
Portland, Oregon 97211
P.O. Box 3137
Portland, Oregon 97208

