

NATIONAL FORUM

Along The Color Line

by Dr. Manning Marable

Violence and Crime in the Black Community

The epidemic of violence in the Black community raises several related questions. What is the social impact of violence within our neighborhoods? What is the effect of violence upon our children? And most importantly, how do we develop a strategy to reverse the proliferation of Black-against-Black crime and violence?

Violence occurs so frequently in the cities that for many people, it has become almost a "normal" factor in our daily lives. We have become accustomed to burglar alarms and security locks to safeguard our personal property and homes. More than one in three families keeps a gun in their homes. We might try to avoid driving through neighborhoods where crack houses are located. We are trying to avoid the problem, but we're not taking steps to solve it. We need to keep in mind that most of the violent crime cases, the assailant and the victim live in the same neighborhood, or are members of the same household. Half of all violent deaths are between husbands and wives. Many others include parents killing their children or children killing parents, or neighbors killing each other. There are hundreds of murders among Blacks for the most trivial reasons--everything from fighting over parking spaces to arguing over five dollars.

Black men are murdering each other, in part, because of the deterioration of jobs and economic opportunity in our communities. For Black young men, the real unemployment rate exceeds 50 percent in most cities. Overall jobless rates for Black men with less than a high school diploma exceed 15 percent. High unemployment, crowded housing and poor health care all contribute to an environment of social chaos and disruption, which create destructive values and behaviors.

The most tragic victims of violence are Black children. Black children between the ages one and four have death rates from homicide which are four times higher than for white children the same ages. According to the Children's Defense Fund, Black children are arrested at almost seven times the rate for white children for the most serious violent crimes and are arrested at more than twice the white rate for serious property crimes. More than half of the arrests for African-American teenagers are for serious property crimes or violent crimes. For instance, arrest rate for black youth aged 11 to 17 for forcible rape is six times higher than for whites. In terms of rates of victimization, nonwhite females are almost 40 percent more likely than white females to be raped, robbed, or victims of other violent crimes.

How do we understand the acts of violence committed by children? We have to begin by focusing on the concept of identity. What is identity? It's an awareness of self in the context of one's environment. Identity is based on the connections between the individual and his or her immediate family and community. We don't exist in isolation of each other. We develop a sense of who we are, of who we wish to become, by interacting with parents, friends, teachers, ministers, coworkers and others.

Our identity is collective, in that it is formed through the inputs of thousands of different people over many years. If the people relate to an individual in a negative manner, an antisocial or deviant personality will be the result. If a child is told repeatedly by teachers or parents that he is stupid, the child will usually do poorly in school, regardless of his natural abilities. If a child is told that he is a chronic liar and untrustworthy, he will eventually begin to lie and steal. If he is physically beaten by his parents frequently and unjustly, he will learn to resort to physical violence against others. If he witnesses his father using violence against his mother,

he could later become violent against women. People are not born hateful or violent. There's no genetic or biological explanation for violence or crime. Violence is learned behavior. The destructive and negative expectations projected on youth can create criminal behavior years later.

Violence between people of color is also directly linked to the educational system. If the curriculum of our public schools does not present the heritage, culture and history of African-Americans, if it ignores or downgrades our vital contributions for a more democratic society, our children are robbed of their heritage. They acquire a distorted perspective about themselves and

and about one third of all white women prisoners have an eighth grade education or less. The vast majority of Black women who are jailed earn less than \$10,000 annual income, are unemployed and/or are welfare recipients. In short, there's a direct correlation between inadequate or poor education, unemployment, poverty and crime. The violence of the American economic system, the deliberate existence of joblessness and poverty as essential components of the system, contributes to crime and violence. People steal if they cannot eat; they will break into other's property in search of shelter; people will deal crack if there are no other jobs available to them in the ghetto.



their communities. If they believe that African-American people have never achieved greatness, in the sciences, art, music, economics and the law, how can they excel or achieve for themselves? Despite the many reforms accomplished to create a more culturally pluralistic environment for learning, most of our public schools are in the business of "miseducation" for people of color.

For example, Sonia Nieto's research on children's literature illustrates that the number of children's books on Puerto Rican topics or themes has dropped significantly since the early 1970s. Less than three hundredths of one percent of all children's books published between 1972-1982 were on Puerto Rican themes. Books on purely African-American themes--not integrated topics--comprise below one percent. African-American and Latino book publishers are usually unable to crack the lucrative public school textbook market. Black and Hispanic topics are usually taught in white public school systems as peripheral or secondary themes, and virtually never integrated across the disciplines. This type of miseducation contributes to negative and antisocial values among young people of color. If all our youth have to measure themselves by the distorted images of the media--the African-American male as a potential criminal, for example--then antisocial behavior will be the logical result.

We also tend to identify the issue of violence solely with males, yet an increasing number of young African-American women are caught in the cycle of drug abuse, antisocial behavior and crime. According to the research of Laurence French, between 1960 and 1974, the rate of women incarcerated in prisons increased four times faster than the imprisonment rate for males. A disproportionately high percentage are Black and Latina women. For example, in North Carolina's prisons, two thirds of all female inmates are Black. Ninety five percent of all Black women prisoners have a high school education or less. Sixty-five percent of all African-American women

THIS WAY FOR BLACK EMPOWERMENT

by Dr. Lenora Lulami

A Threat And A Promise

A physician in Berkeley, California who calls himself an advocate for people with AIDS recently charged that the New Alliance Party is out to "take over" and destroy the largest AIDS service agency in Alameda County which itself has the highest proportion of people of color with AIDS in the state. At a public meeting he argued that the county health department should withhold funding from the AIDS Project for the East Bay or close it down until NAP is "rooted out."

It's outrageous, criminal and blatantly racist that anyone would argue for shutting down a program such as the AIDS Project--no matter who ran it! Why is someone who calls himself an AIDS advocate in effect siding with the right wing fanatics who would be happy to see all AIDS funding cut off? People with AIDS need more services than they have now. I have called on the Project's board of directors to demand Dr. Alcalay's immediate resignation from the Alameda County AIDS Advisory Board since he obviously does not have the interests of the community at heart. We must not allow the AIDS crisis and the people victimized by this disease to be used as political football by phony gay advocates.

Dr. Alcalay's shocking proposal elicited an immediate public apology to the AIDS Project and to NAP from the chair. But the gay press in the county mindlessly repeated the accusation that NAP was attempting a "takeover" while neglecting to question the political motives of someone who hates independent politics so much that he would rather see an agency which serves people with AIDS close its doors than see it "taken over" by NAP--whatever that means.

The accusation that the New Alliance Party has taken over the AIDS Project for the East Bay is neither true nor relevant. The fact that the Project's director of client services is a NAP member is hardly evidence of a "takeover." But the hysteria generated by the "concerned physician" and some of the area's gay and so-called left press is evidence of their opposition to independent politics and their allegiance to the Democratic Party. They are so committed to stopping a Black-led, multi-racial, pro-gay independent party from succeeding that they are willing to play with the lives of people with AIDS. This is not just about NAP--it's about leaders in the gay movement and the gay press allowing themselves to be used by the Democratic Party to do its dirty work, even if that means selling out people with AIDS even if it means their lives. And those in the press who lent their credibility to his outrageous "suggestion" by uncritically reporting his accusations against NAP are, in my opinion, equally culpable.

In 1988 no other traditionally Democratic Party constituency was subjected to the relentlessly hostile propaganda warning voters to stay away from my independent presidential campaign with which the gay community was steadily bombarded until the eve of the election. The attacks ranged from poison pen leaflets and articles in local

gay publications to rumor campaigns that made their way around the country to threats of physical violence against an independent, militantly pro-gay African-American woman.

In the spring of 1988 Sue Hyde, the director of the National Lesbian and Gay Task Force's Privacy Project, authored a page and a half long, single-spaced letter attacking me and NAP which was sent accompanied by a viciously racist, anti-NAP pamphlet entitled Clouds Blur the Rainbow, to gay newspapers around the country. Many of them published Hyde's shamelessly self-serving attempt to whip lesbians and gays into line behind Michael Dukakis, the notoriously homophobic, anti-poor governor of Massachusetts.

Yet despite the fact that the beholden-to-the-Democrats gay establishment did everything it could to scare lesbians and gays away from my independent candidacy, I received 2% of the national gay vote.

Yes, NAP is a threat. Not to the lesbian and gay community but to all the sellouts and hypocrites who stand in the way of independent politics and the empowerment of those who have been passed by and passed over. And I'm prepared to fight the enemies of our people with everything I've got for as long as it takes. And that's a promise.

Civil Rights Journal

by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

Keep Pressure And Sanctions On South Africa

Now that South Africa finally has freed Nelson Mandela and suspended some of the restrictions and bans that had been instituted against the African National Congress and other groups, there are many, including President George Bush, who are saying the time has come to relax the pressure on South Africa. To the contrary, we believe the anti-apartheid movement should increase the pressure and international economic sanctions campaign on South Africa. In spite of the latest government actions, apartheid is still very much alive in South Africa.

Despite the eloquence of South African F. W. DeKlerk's speech to the racially exclusive and segregated South African Parliament, the basic racist principles and institutions of apartheid are being maintained. Yes, changes are now unfolding in South Africa. Yes, DeKlerk's speech was a welcome departure from the rigid positions of past South African presidents. Yes, we greet the freeing of Nelson Mandela with a great sense of joy. But it is exceedingly clear that the changes that are now occurring in South Africa are a direct result of pressure from the majority African population in South Africa and from the global anti-apartheid movement's economic sanctions against South Africa.

Yes, sanctions have worked and will continue to make a difference. Sanctions are effective and this is a concrete method of helping to force change in South Africa.

We salute the faith, fortitude, courage and irrepressible strength of Nelson Mandela after living through the ordeal of being unjustly imprisoned for twenty-seven years

in South Africa as a political prisoner. Mandela's struggle embodies and epitomizes the struggle of the people for freedom, justice, self-determination and peace.

President Bush stated, "I think when people move in the right direction, it is certainly time to review all policy... I view it positively, and most people around the world will." Yet most people around the world, particularly in southern Africa, are calling for keeping the pressure on South Africa so that more changes toward dismantling apartheid will occur. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher following Bush's perspective concluded, "We believe in carrots as well as sticks and... the South African government should now have some of the former." Thatcher should be reminded that the problem in the past has been the diplomatic and economic support of "apartheid" by the Western notion through "constructive engagement" that has helped to prolong the life of apartheid. Racist apartheid should not be fed "carrots." The United States and Great Britain should refrain from supporting the apartheid regime in Pretoria.

The African National Congress responded to DeKlerk's announcement. The ANC stated, "We welcome the lifting of the bans on the ANC and other organizations. We also welcome other positive measures announced by F.W. DeKlerk. We are, however, gravely concerned that the Pretoria regime has taken the decision that some political prisoners will not be released, that the state of emergency is not lifted in its entirety and that the practice of detention without trial will continue. These decisions subvert rather than add to the process of creating the proper political climate. The normalization of relations between South Africa and the rest of the world must continue to depend on ending the apartheid system. We therefore expect no country committed to ending white minority domination in South Africa will do anything to lessen the isolations of the apartheid regime."

Therefore, together with the African National Congress Bishop Tutu, Rev. Allen Boesak, the Mass Democratic Movement of South Africa, and millions of others we say, "Keep the pressure on South Africa until victory is finally won."

VANTAGE POINT

Pan Africanism: The Key to Global Progress For The Black World

In his most famous speech, "Message to the Grassroots," Malcolm X explained that "revolutions are fought for land." Malcolm pressed the point that "... land is the basis of independence." The struggle in the world today Malcolm suggested was between "the landless and the landlords." Malcolm X was driving home the point that African people in America and the world need to liberate, maintain and develop land. For as the old blues rendition goes, "mama may have, poppa may have, but God bless the child that got his own." Africa should be the principal land base for African people in Africa and the world.

In 1961 W.E.B. Dubois wrote: "Today out of Africa come 95 percent of the world's diamonds; 80 percent of the cobalt; 60 percent of the gold; 75 percent of the sisal hemp; 70 percent of the palm oil; 30 percent of the chrome and manganese; 15 percent of the coffee; and an increasing part of the uranium and radium and large amounts of tin, iron and spices."

That was in 1961. No doubt Africa's share of most of these categories of minerals, raw materials and cash crops has dramatically increased since that time. And Africa has gained a new-found prominence as an oil producing continent. It was not by accident that Europeans sat down at the Congress of Berlin in 1884 to systematize their mad scramble to carve up and colonize Africa. From Britain to Belgium, from Germany to Portugal, Italy and Spain, Europeans knew that Africa is the richest continent on earth.

The great tragedy is that since the great holocaust of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the enormous human and material wealth of Africa has been used to develop and enrich Europe and America at the expense of the development of the indigenous people of Africa and her sons and daughters in the diaspora. The great challenge confronting the Black world as we face the 21st century is the urgent need to break the psychological, cultural and political-economic chains of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism in order to reclaim the resources of Africa for the development of Africa and the Black world.

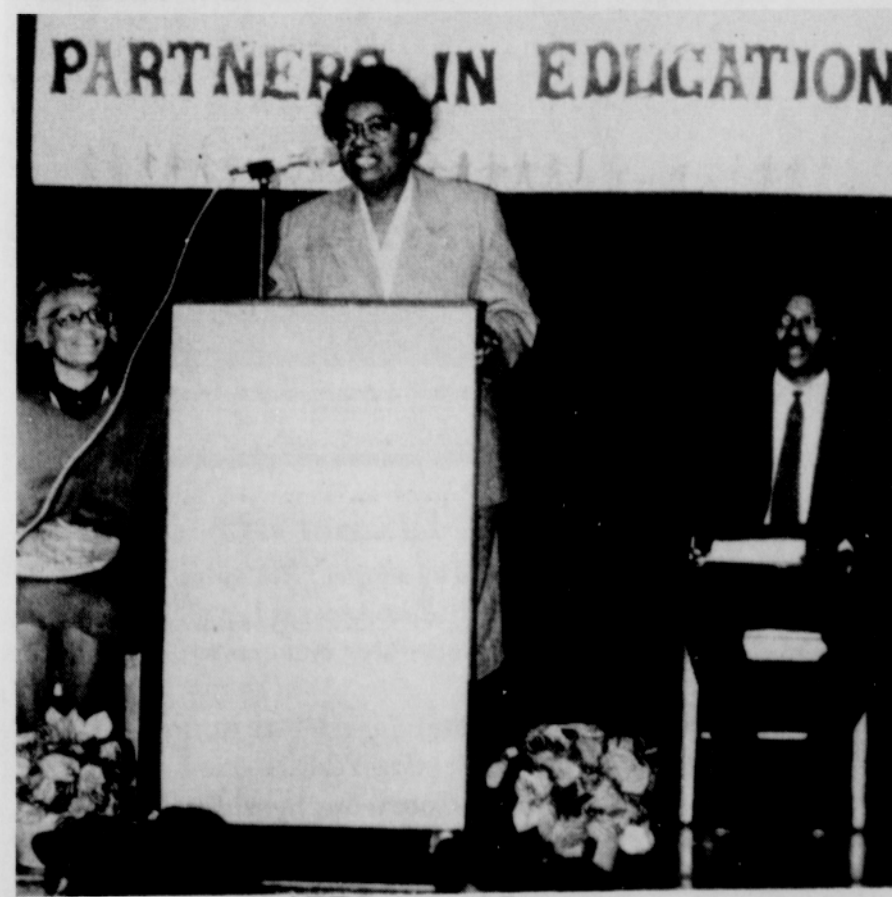
To confront this challenge is not to succumb to a kind of narrow, self-centered global ethno-centrism. It is simply to recognize that "Charity begins at home and spreads abroad." That we as African people must learn to love our neighbors as we LOVE OURSELVES. Indeed the humanistic character of our traditional African values suggest that Ethiopia will stretch forth its hand to lead the world.

As we face the dawning of a new century, the cold facts are that western Europe is slated to consolidate an economic and political union in 1992. East and West Germany are on the verge of reunification. Eastern Europe is poised for a possible economic common market of its own. Last but not least, the United States and the Soviet Union are embarking on an unprecedented era of cooperation and collaboration. The

obvious question is, where will this escalating economic and political unity of Europe and America leave Africa and the Third World?

The answer is also obvious. Africa and the Third World will be left out, permanently locked in a condition of poverty, underdevelopment and subservience. This is the unpleasant reality we face unless there is a growing commitment to economic and political co-operation between African nations on the continent and a solid link between the nations of Africa and Africans in America, the Caribbean and the rest of the diaspora. These pan-African economic and political relationships can then become a basis for increased Third World political solidarity and economic cooperation.

Given the tremendous changes that are unfolding before our eyes almost daily, African people the world over had better be prepared to make a serious commitment to the afro-centric development of Africa as a economic and political power base for African aspirations the world over. In the context of this scenario, African-Americans must undergo a serious change of attitude towards Africa, our role as African people in America and our vision and mission on the world scene. We will either transform ourselves, or we are destined to enter the 21st century just as we entered the 20th century... as peons in America and on planet earth.



UNDER A "PARTNERS IN EDUCATION" BANNER--Dr. Beverly C. Glenn, dean of the Howard University School of Education, addresses students, teachers and parents at Nalle Elementary School to seal a partnership between the school and the university. The dean has launched an assault on forces contributing to poor learning at the school located in a drug-infested area of the nation's capital. (Photo by Marvin T. Jones)

SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE

High school students who are interested in applying for \$1,000 college scholarships should request applications by March 16, 1990 for Educational Communications Scholarship Foundation, 721 N. McKinley Road, Lake Forest, Illinois 60045. To receive an application, students should send a note stating their name, address, city, state and zip code, approximate grade point average and year of graduation. Sixty-five winners will be selected on the basis of academic performance, involvement in extra-curricular activities and need for financial aid.

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