

EDITORIAL

Civil Rights Journal

An American Tragedy

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

We all saw the grim pictures. The two little white boys supposedly kidnapped by a black man in the course of a carjacking. A tearful mother begging that her children be returned. A police drawing of a black man flashing on television screens across the nation.

And then the horrible truth came out - a mother who drove her two little children into a lake to drown. A country that was once again taken in by the accusation that it was a black man who did it. A country that did not think twice about the accusation because we so easily believe that a black man did it.

Some of us remember the same song, different verse which was played in Boston only a few years ago. Another horrible murder. That time it was a husband who killed his pregnant wife and blamed a black man who had attacked them in their car. A country that was taken in because it's so easy to believe that when it comes to crime a black man did it.

Some of us remember the time when such accusations would have resulted in false arrests, or worse yet,

would have resulted in a black man swinging from the branches of a tree or walking into a gas chamber. Yes, we have made progress - no innocent man was jailed or killed - but we can be pretty sure that some innocent black men were followed, were stopped, perhaps were harassed all across South Carolina and its neighboring states. We have made some progress, but once again we were eager to believe that a black man did it.

African Americans in Union County, S.C. when they were interviewed voiced a number of opinions. Some said they knew it was a false accusation because there was no way a car driven by a black man with two screaming children in the back would not have been seen by someone. Some said they thought the mother was guilty all along. Many looked frightened and relieved that this nightmare was over.

The nightmare is over in Union County, but African American men in this country have not awakened yet from the daily terror of racism. For years African American men faced higher rates of incarceration than black men in the world's most racist country, South Africa. Today, with over a million Americans imprisoned in state and federal facilities,

the number of African American prisoners far outdistance the number of whites. Nearly half of the prisoners on death row are African Americans or people of color.

African American men are adversely impacted in other ways as well. Even those with college degrees earn less than African American women and white men and women, according to a recent survey by the Economic Policy Institute. Those who work in corporate America are seldom able to reach the upper-most levels. Even when they do, they are not allowed to join private clubs and they, too, often are followed by security guards when they enter department stores. In cities all across this country African American men, even those dressed in three piece suits, find it difficult, if not impossible to hail a cab on the street. Two years ago, six African American Secret Service agents were not served at Denny's.

The messages which America receives about African American men are that they are criminals, they are fast-talking con artists, they are lazy people who refuse to work and to take responsibility for their families. Even when the Bill Cosby show was

on the air, he was seen as the exception to the rule. The reality is that most African American men are hard-working, law-abiding citizens who overcome enormous odds each and every day of their lives.

These negative stereotypes of African American men are dangerous for us all. They are dangerous for black male children who can too easily fall into the trap of self-fulfilling prophecy. They are dangerous to African American women because they threaten our families by degrading our husbands and sons. They are dangerous to white men and women who find themselves protecting their purses and wallets when a black man walks by and who may be losing the chance to meet or work with fine human beings. They are dangerous to other people of color who can easily be put into the same category.

The negative stereotyping of African American men is truly an American tragedy. Just as the Smith family in South Carolina apologized to the African American community, so must the media, law enforcement agencies and other institutions who perpetuate this behavior. They must apologize for the images and practices and then they must do something about changing them.

THIS WAY FOR BLACK EMPOWERMENT

As America Goes, So Goes South Carolina

BY DR. LENORA FULANI

Wayne Griffin is a 36-year-old African American man who runs his own small insurance company in Greer, South Carolina. He is married, with one child, and will soon be a father again. He calls himself "an ordinary voter," and in many ways he is. Mr. Griffin was also an independent candidate for governor of South Carolina, where Black people make up one-third of the population and 27% of the electorate, but where no Black person has been elected to statewide office in more than 100 years. I am proud to have endorsed him and Charles Bunche, an African American activist who was the candidate for lieutenant governor. Both were the candidates of the New Alliance Party, which is a ballot status party in the state.

"I do not believe that the Democratic or the Republican candidate for governor has the capacity to provide my kids with a future," Mr. Griffin says. "Mr. Beasley, the Republican, is hoping to win the election by mobilizing white voters who think that the Black folks have too much in this country already. The Democratic Party takes us for granted. Mr. Theodore, the Democratic candidate, assumes that he will get the Black vote automatically.

"Now the Black community may be suffering from chronic poverty," Bother Griffin continues. "And it may be the target of a new wave of racist attitudes. But it is not stupid. And more and more, around this state and in this country, the Black community is looking for alternatives to the Democrats and Republicans. I decided to run as an independent on the New Alliance Party line to provide that alternative, and so that the people of this state, and the Black community in particular, could get busy starting to build an independent party which can represent our interests."

A poll by the Times-Mirror Corporation indicates that half the American people are sick and tired of the two old parties and want to see a new third party formed. The poll showed that nearly half of the African Americans surveyed want such a party.

Like me, Mr. Griffin was a delegate to the founding convention of the national Patriot Party in Arlington, Virginia this past April. Like me, he recognizes that our people may at long last be ready to declare their independence from a two-party political system in which we are still treated as second-class citizens. And, like me, Mr. Griffin is committed to building bridges between the African American community and the predominantly white base of the Perot movement in the effort to create a

new, national third party capable of competing with the Republicans and Democrats for power at every level of government, from the White House to City Hall.

The possible defection of Black voters is scaring the professional politicians of the Democratic party silly. And they have good reason to be afraid. As a columnist for the New York Post noted recently: "Nation-wide, Democrats have grown so dependent on overwhelming Black support that losing even a small percentage could cost them big. Alarm bells went off when a recent Times-Mirror poll found only 71 percent of Blacks planned to back Democrats on Nov. 8 instead of the usual 90 percent, prompting speculation that many will stay home.

"In virtually every big state, Democrats lost key races - including [New York]. Which is why President Clinton went to Harlem to appeal to blacks to back Cuomo - and chose Black-oriented WLJB for a radio interview.

"It's an even more delicate question for Democrats in the South, where the party's candidates can get by with about 42 percent of the white vote because they get nearly 90 percent among Blacks. "The majority of Southern whites are going to vote Republican. The question for Democrats is whether they can get a big enough Black majority," says Emory University politics professor Merle

Black. "But southern Democratic politicians have not found it to their advantage in recent years to emphasize issues that directly appeal to Blacks" -- for fear, of alienating whites."

In other words, African American voters held the key to elections around the country this year. Like the majority of white Americans, they are burning up with anti-incumbent fever. And they don't look kindly on the professional politicians who seek to replace them by pretending to be "people's candidates" - johnny-come-lately supporters of term limits, initiative and referendum, recall and other democratic reforms whose commitment to democracy is about as deep as the commitment of the average wolf to the rights of chickens.

No doubt, many of our people expressed their disgust with two-party politics-as-usual by staying home on November 8. That's one way to. A far more powerful way to make that statement is to have voted independent wherever that alternative is available, as it is was this year in South Carolina.

An independent political movement is being born in America. It's name is the Patriot Party, and independent Black leaders like Wayne Griffin, Charles Bunche and many others are helping to bring it into existence. Come with us.

Vantage Point

Supporting Real Democracy In Haiti

BY RON DANIELS

Developing democracy has never really been the major priority of U.S. foreign policy.

As President Calvin Coolidge once put it "the business of government is business." No matter how rosy the pictures coming out of Haiti, with the masses flying American flags and praising President Clinton as their savior, the ultimate goals of the U.S. occupation are clear: create the conditions to enable U.S. corporate interest to exploit cheap Haitian labor in a "secure environment" and stop the spread of radical ideas and models for change in the Caribbean region.

To achieve these objectives it is essential that President Aristide be tightly reined in during the remainder of his abbreviated term and that the radical popular/mass movements which comprise the backbone of his support be neutralized or destroyed.

Alternatives to the pro-Aristide movements will be cultivated and more "moderate/responsible" leaders will be and surfaced who are seen as compatible with U.S. interests and designs on Haiti. You can be certain that the U.S. political apparatus in Haiti - the occupation force, the CIA and U.S. diplomatic mission - is busy working to implement its program for "democracy" for Haiti at this very moment.

While it is good to see Father Aristide back in his beloved Haiti as president of the Nation, in reality his power is severely limited. Having returned to power on the back of the U.S. occupation of his country, Aristide is now almost totally dependent on the U. S. for his safety and survival. At any moment President Clinton can use Congressional and popular opposition to the U.S. military presence in Haiti to bring the troops home, thereby leaving Aristide naked and vulnerable before his enemies. The U.S. will use this depen-

dency as leverage to impose its will around the key issues that effect its interests and strategy for the "new" Haiti.

Aristide and the U.S. have already clashed on a number of issues: Aristide is insisting that the U.S. trained military be drastically reduced in size from 8,000 to 1,500. For some inexplicable reason the U.S. prefers a larger Haitian military; Aristide would like to begin the reconstruction of the Haitian police force by screening out all of the terrorist elements that dominated the force under the dread Colonel Francois. Thus far the U.S. has shown little inclination to purge the police force of these elements. Instead, the U.S. has sought to revive the police force and utilize it as an ally in the pacification process; Aristide is demanding that the CIA created/sponsored para-military organization FRAPH be disbanded and dismantled. The U.S. seems determined to recognize FRAPH as a legitimate rightwing political party

in the new Haiti. To reiterate the balance of power is on the side of the liberators/saviors/U.S. occupation forces.

There is an important X factor in this power equation however, the Haitian masses and the popular movements comprised of peasants, workers and progressive priests and their parishioners. Like it or not the U.S. occupation has had an unintended consequence. The Haitian masses have been emboldened by the relative safety created by the U.S. occupation and are taking matters into their own hands - smashing police stations and military barracks, arresting attaches and members of FRAPH and demanding that they be prosecuted, and pouring into the streets in masse with any rumor or hint that the reactionary forces are moving to harm President Aristide. The Haitian masses, not President Aristide alone, are the best hope for real democracy in Haiti.

perspectives

The I.Q. Attack Is Resumed: "Bell Curve" is Right Wing Icon! II

Last week we introduced two new academic comedians who intend to milk the I.Q. lecture circuit for all that lucrative hustle is worth--replacing the vaudeville twins, Jensen and Shockley in the "Black-Bashing" arena ("The Bell Curve: Intelligence And Class Structure In American Life", Herrnstein and Murray, The Free Press, 1994).

Although clever enough to avoid any hint of borrowings from Darwin or his supporters among the current



By Professor Mckinley Burt

crowd of socio-biologists, this racist pair emphasized every canon of the "Manifest Destiny" crowd. In case anything was missed, they carefully hedged their statistical bets by inserting many little boxes which, without appearing to do so, would effectively skew the reams of 'Scientific' conditions reached in the formidable appendices. Our sympathy to the graduate students who were expected to correlate this trivia.

You would have thought that talk-show host "Russ Limbaugh" was directing the show, given the box appearing on page 271 of the chapter. "Ethnic Differences in cognitive Ability". This cute little skewing device which I have given the name, "Whos On First" (befitting a vaudeville skit) actually is titled "Ethnic Nomenclature". This particular 'hedge' is a mixed bag of political correctness and an obsequious kowtowing to those minority groups that have political power enough to affect the sales of the book. Do you remember that a few weeks ago we published a verbatim description of the feds contemplated revision of the ethnic categories to be used henceforth? Too bad those "graduate students" don't read the Congressional Record.

But, hold my scathing opinions for a while, lets see what is the opinion of the very respected columnist for the "Washington Post", William Raspberry. "What is happening", The Bell Curve argues, "is that more and more important jobs require more and more brains, that the possessors of those brains tend to marry among themselves and

that (braininess being heritable) the smart get smarter and more in control. On the other end of this "cognitive elite", the dumb also marry among themselves. Voila! The underclass."

"Murray... seems not to notice that he has embraced largely discredited views regarding the heritability, measurability and immutability of intelligence (As I pointed out last week)... or that he may be confusing brains with social advantage... nevertheless, Murray and Herrnstein - cite the widening gap between the average manufacturing employee and the average engineer."

Mr. Raspberry's point is well taken, there is no unalterable, inherited cognitive characteristic in human being. I often use a personal experience. There were four African American kids of the same age and middle class who remained in touch from kindergarten through high school of the segregated St. Louis school system. And through associated activities from music schools and science clubs to Y.M.C.A. camps and Boy Scout Troops: William Wilson, PhD (social scientist); Louis Cloyd (Physician); Charles Proctor, PhD (scientist); Our I.Q.s ranged from 189 down to 162.

And more at that "social advantage" Mr. Raspberry speaks of--has nothing to do with any "innate intelligence". All four of us were reading and writing from kindergarten on. All homes were filled with the "right" books and magazine, all families had older people in the homes who were not employed, but had plenty of time to teach, guide, nurture and translate the real world for us (we were children of teachers, doctors, post office-employees).

But, when I revisited the St. Louis scenario (or other large cities) years later, I found that the "rest of the crowd had caught up. Life experiences had effectively translated the system for many, many who had tested in figures more closely related to daily temperature readings. Though late, they too had become engineers, doctors, scientists, administrators, curriers, professors, etc.--and good one.

Continued next week

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