

# RELIGION

## A L T E R N A T I V E S

### Love, Beauty And Truth!

BY M. ISAACS

Where is the love, beauty and truth we seek? This question, in some degree, can be seen on all adult faces in all walks of life. As I walk the streets of our city, viewing mankind as I go, I see, to some degree, despair, loss and loneliness on the faces of all with whom I come in contact. Fear is most apparent in body language and mistrust shines forth from the eyes. Some put on brave faces to meet the public; masks that hide the hopelessness, the depression and in many instances, the greed, hate and violence lurking close beneath the surface. In all I view, fear is the most prominent emotion. Fear of what tomorrow will bring; fear of death of self and loved ones; fear of being alone in this world; fear of hunger; fear of loss of everything one has accumulated throughout a lifetime of

toil and the giving of one's self for a secure future.

In this day when, it seems, everyone is attempting to "do their own thing" without regard for family, friend or foe, it is not surprising when acts of love are few and far between. When one does come across an unselfish act of love, it is viewed with suspicion and belief that there must be an ulterior motive; the person performing an act of love is looked upon as a fool; a sucker to be used and misused or at least to be discredited in the eyes of all beholders. Therefore, charitable gifts are given to the poor with strings attached; 1) They must kowtow and give thanks or they will not receive assistance. 2) They must wait until persons and agencies are ready to help, no matter how dire the need might be. 3) Still they do not meet the requirements for assistance; they must have nothing

material nor, in some instances, must they have any smattering of pride or integrity.

In some agencies, receiving government funds for assistance to the needy, you must present your request for assistance to the lowest person employed by the agency, travel up the personnel ladder person by person, exposing your needs, your personal business, your life style, your physical and emotional shortcomings to all and sundry, until you reach the head of the agency, only to find you do not qualify for assistance. Meanwhile, you've spent all your money for transportation to and from the agency, begged neighbors to babysit, when without meals, etc., because this was necessary to keep all the appointments required to receive assistance. Therefore, you've ended up poorer than before your requested help. Is there any wonder

that there is hate, mistrust and despair among those needing assistance to maintain life?

A case study: for the sake of privacy I'll call this person Mary. Mary, a widow, found herself short of funds, with bills she could not pay because of high rent. If she paid the rent, electricity, life insurance and transportation, there would be nothing left for food. Therefore, she decided to apply for temporary food stamps until she could find a cheaper place to live; and thereby, hangs this tale: She secured a ride to the food stamp office, only to be told she was not at the office that handled her area. Although, she felt she was imposing on the person giving her a ride, she was taken to the proper office. There she was given an appointment to meet with a case worker two days hence. Using 50 cents of her meager funds she arrived for her appoint-

ment, only to find that she was not told about everything she was to bring with her. Another appointment was set up for her to bring in the required information. Hungry and disappointed, Mary returned home. Using a neighbor's phone she secured copies of information required, gathering all she could find; lest they ask for something they had forgotten to inform her she would need. A week passed before her next appointment for an interview with the case worker. The morning of her appointment, Mary received a call from the agency receptionist, informing her that her case worker was called away and that her appointment would be set over to the next week. More than seven days has passed since she first went into the office to apply for food stamps. By this time, Mary is angry, and she remembers all the food she has donated to feed the poor, all the money

she donated to United Way for social services; a lifetime of giving and now when she is in need, there is no assistance readily available. Mary calls the supervisor of the food stamp agency and voices her complaint. The supervisor tells Mary to come in and a field worker would be available to take her information. Mary comes into the office and meets with the field worker who informs her that all information given before would have to be filed again, because no one knows where to locate the file the other case worker had started. Luckily, Mary had put all the information into her purse, wisely surmising that something like this would happen. The new field worker does not identify herself, but she is pleasant enough and sympathized with Mary regarding the length of time taken to process here application for food stamps. (Continued next week.)

## Young African Americans Of The '90s Need Heroes

BY MORRIS PRICE

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I don't want to hear another horror story about the next generation of African Americans. Pundits on TV and in the papers, school officials, and government bureaucrats have all weighed in on the lethal mix of violence and apathy among young African Americans. I would like to remind the well-meaning commentators that what this generation needs are a few heroes, and that these kids may have a better historical sense of "the good old days" than we care to admit.

As a child of the '60s, I readily admit that this generation of

African Americans has reached levels of teenage crime and violence that I wouldn't have dreamed possible 20 years ago. However, as a college administrator, I am also in a position to witness an army of youth, who, like the teenagers of the '60s, have decided to change the world they were born in. Armed only with sweat, determination and optimism - and getting precious little support from the government and the older generation - these young people are truly the ancestors of the '60s radicals.

Does history really repeat itself? Take a look at the African-American contingent of the so-called Generation X. This generation has adopted afros, bell bottoms, angry music and a defiant distaste for anything that resembles The Establishment.

At first glance, these may seem like nothing but fashion statements from a rebellious youth unconcerned with politics. But look more closely: African-American youth are also returning to the civil grass-roots. The movement started with people who tried to change the world by changing themselves. But somewhere along the way the movement forgot its grass roots, and that's when it lost a lot of us.

Although the slogans are different, today's students reflect the same attitudes we chanted in the '60s: "Burn, baby, burn." "If you're not a part of the solution you're a part of the problem." "Don't trust anyone over 30."

"Burn, baby, burn" was the expression of a frustrated generation that felt helpless and betrayed after the deaths of Martin

Luther King and Malcolm X. Tought that if we worked hard, turned the other cheek, and reformed our own communities, we had believed that truth, justice and the American way would eventually win out. The assassinations proved us wrong.

Shocked by the Rodney King verdict in 1993, frustrated African-American youth in Los Angeles set fire to the city as a reflection of their disbelief in society's ability to provide justice. The message couldn't have been clearer: "Burn, baby, burn!"

Where were the comforting words from the civil rights veterans - who, a mere 25 years earlier, attempted to send the same message in the same manner? Is it so hard to believe that today's youth have read their history books and learned that seldom

does anything change without a spark?

Many people condemn today's Generation X for being feckless, reactionary and immature. We ask, "Where did they learn such attitudes?" We need look no further than ourselves.

Youth of the '60s were hell bent to change the world and determined not to become part of the problem. We were committed. We believed that the world as it had been handed down to us should not be allowed to remain the racist place it was. What happened? After 25 years, we're hell bent on getting a better job with a corner office. And we're committed again - committed to not rocking the boat.

It shouldn't surprise us ex-radicals that African-American youth aren't running after jobs at the big

corporations but are rather volunteering in grassroots community organizations. Some are postponing law school to join the Peace Corps. African-American students at my university in January did a reenactment of Martin Luther King's 1963 march on Washington. They want to change the world.

"Burn, baby, burn" is no dry phrase from a history book to these kids but a word of warning from a bright generation who may have been paying more attention to their history lessons than we imagined. If our older generation has failed, it is by failing to give the younger generation the same kind of heroes and directions we had. Martin Luther King provided a direction for our anger, a direction that today's young African Americans need badly.

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