

EDITORIAL

Editorial Articles Do Not Necessarily
Reflect Or Represent The Views Of
The Portland Observer

BY REVEREND JAMES T. MEEKS
I do not support the possession, distribution or use of illegal drugs of any kind at anytime. On the other hand, I do believe in equal protection under the law.

Those being caught with one type of drug (e.g., crack cocaine) should not be given disproportionate prison sentences over those caught with similar illegal drugs; and they should not be tried in different courts resulting in uneven sentences for the same offense. In my judgement, the uneven incarceration of those caught with crack cocaine is a deliberate attempt to fill the jails with young Black youth.

The FACTS are astounding, disturbing and outrageous! In 1980, of every 1,000 persons arrested on drug charges, 19 were sent to prison. In 1992, the numbers were 104/1,000. In 1993, the nation's prison system grew at a rate of 1,200 inmates per week.

Between 1982 and 1992, state governments built 455 new prisons. Sixty percent of those in prison are Black, while Blacks are only 12% of the population. Ninety-one percent of those serving a five-year mandatory sentence for possession of crack cocaine are African American, yet 55% of all crack cocaine users are White.

The LA Times reports that the "War on Crack Targets Minorities Over Whites" despite evidence that large numbers of Whites use and sell crack cocaine. Federal law enforcement in Southern California has

NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION Jail Industrial Complex

waged its war against crack almost exclusively in minority neighborhoods, exposing Black and Latino offenders to the toughest drug penalties in the nation. Not a single White, records show, has been convicted of a crack cocaine offense in Federal courts serving Los Angeles and six southland counties since Congress enacted stiff mandatory sentences for crack dealers in 1986.

Only a few Whites have been federally prosecuted in the region stretching from San Luis Obispo to the Mexican border, while hundreds of minorities have been locked up in federal prison. Virtually all White crack offenders have been prosecuted in state court, where sentences are far less. The difference can be up to 8 years for the same offense.

In Los Angeles County, hundreds of white crack traffickers were convicted in state court between 1988 and 1994. No Whites were prosecuted federally during this period, though one was indicted a few months ago and is awaiting trial. Whites are more likely than any other racial group to use crack, according to surveys by

the National Institute on Drug Abuse. But the U.S. Sentencing Commission reports that about 96% of the crack defendants in federal court are nonwhite. And, records show, the majority are low-level dealers, look-outs and couriers rather than drug kingpins.

In order to serve 5 years mandatory for the possession of powder cocaine, one must possess \$3,000 worth. Five years for marijuana requires one to possess \$42,000 worth. To serve 5 years for crack cocaine, one must possess only \$29 worth.

From 1979-to-1990, prison building has increased 612%. In 1948 the prison population in America was 155,000. In 1995, Texas alone had more than 155,000 prisoners. In 1972, 169,000 people worked for the prison system nationwide. In 1992, that number is more than 523,000.

In 1960, president Eisenhower warned us about the military-industrial-complex. In 1995, I am warning you about the prison-industrial-complex. To prove that investing in prisons is big business let me list some of the investor: Smith Barney (part

Owner of a prison in Florida); American Express (part owner in Oklahoma); General Electric (part owner in Tennessee); Prudential Insurance; Merrill Lynch; Goldman Sachs and the Correction Corporation of America, a private developer of prisons, which earned revenue in excess of \$100 million last year.

In 10 years the prison population in California has gone from 19,000 to 124,000. The largest single campaign contribution to a candidate for governor was \$423,000, given to Pete Wilson by the California Corrections Officers. I don't know the average teacher salary in California, but the yearly salary for prison guards in California is \$45,000, the highest in the nation.

New York's latest state budget seeks to dismiss 84 of its 159 Chaplains, which will result in even less spiritual guidance for inmates in the future.

That is why we must again mobilize, become active, return to the streets, and register and vote. Clergy from around the country are coming to Chicago on Monday, August 21st to plan such an action campaign.

I, along with other clergy and the community in Chicago, will lead a march on the Cook County jail on Saturday, August 26th to demand that business-as-usual at the Cook County change; Sunday, August 27th is Rainbow National Voter Registration Day in our churches; and an action is planned for Monday, August 28, the anniversary of Dr. King's speech. FMI: Rev. James T. Meeks, 312-821-4300.

Business Exchange Renewing The NAACP And Black America

BY WILLIAM REED

Do you remember when the "Flip-Top" cigarette box was the latest rage across America?

That period, in the 1960s, was probably the last time that the venerable National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was held in high esteem by people across the country and funded by a significant portion of Black Americans. In 1994, the NAACP was rocked to its roots and its top two leaders sacked for financial wrongdoing. Now, after the organization's 87th Annual Convention the clearest message to emerge was that the African American community will have to take more responsibility for the survival of the NAACP and the organization will have to look beyond Myrlie Evers-Williams for the sophisticated leadership that is desperately needed to guide a besieged black community through harrowing times into the 20th century.

The man who may be the best choice to guide the NAACP back from oblivion was growing up on the wrong side of the streets in Baltimore when "Flip-Top" cigarette boxes were in vogue. But, Kweisi Mfume was probably smoking them, along with a few other unsavory things, as a teenager well versed in the ways of the streets. Now, the Congressman

from Baltimore and former chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) is the latest touted figure for being the next executive director of the NAACP. Rep. Mfume would bring the knowledge and culture of the streets, as well as that of Capitol Hill, to the leadership of the NAACP. But, many do question why Mfume, who has been in Congress for almost 10 years, would leave a safe congressional seat and become the day-to-day operating chief of the nation's oldest civil rights organization? The reason "why" is that a man with his special attributes could do much more for "The Race" at the NAACP than he could being a professional politician lurching at the government trough.

Those among us who simply seek the security of "a job," during their lifetime would wonder: "Why would he give up a good government job to take one with a debt-ridden group of blacks?" The NAACP is old and wounded and deeply in debt. Kweisi Mfume is a person who can take the NAACP to a new level of function and finance. He has consistently stood up and fought for the interests of black people in Maryland and across the U.S. As the four-term representative of Maryland's 7th Congressional District, Mfume has traveled the country promoting the CBC, and other

causes. He knows where to go to get the funds - in government and the private sector - that the NAACP so desperately needs. He has the image, among blacks and the majority community that will allow people to buy memberships and fund programs without hesitation. The NAACP is battling a \$3.8 million budget deficit and a hostile political climate and needs to raise \$10 million just to carry the group through 1996. The money is needed to retire the debt, run the group's Baltimore headquarters and four regional offices and provide a necessary cushion as it struggles to elevate its presence as a national civil rights force.

The outlook for most of Black America is as precarious as that of a dinghy in a hurricane. Voting rights are under attack and Black America's scalawag group of representatives are about to be ousted in droves. The shaky edifice of affirmative action is being dismantled, funding for public school systems with large black populations is eroding and education and training programs are being scuttled. The time is ripe for someone who has more than their personal interest in mind to take the leadership mantle of Black America.

If Mfume is offered the NAACP job and doesn't take it, it would speak volumes about his concern, or lack of

it, for the growth and development of African Americans. For the betterment of "the Race" Mfume would do well to follow the example laid out by his predecessor, Parren Mitchell. As opposed to the blacks in Congress who've been there for decades, while their district's communities continue a free-fall of deterioration, Mitchell came to the Congress, authored numerous bills that helped blacks gain access to more government contracting and supplier opportunities, and retired to private life. Rep. Mfume, a life member of the NAACP, undoubtedly has reached his zenith as far as what he can do for blacks in the Congress. It is time for him to help the NAACP repair its image. It is time for a dedicated leader of black men and women to help us get off the bottom of America's social rung.

Just like cigarettes and the flip-top box, the NAACP is out of vogue and supporters. Its major needs are money and members. The main fundraising tool for the NAACP has to be recruitment. Current NAACP officials say they'd like to get 50,000 new life members at \$500 each and 500,000 regular members at \$10 apiece. This type of "empowerment" would bode well for the NAACP and Mfume at the helm would do well toward achieving the "empowerment" of Black America.

perspectives

We All Need To Go To School (And Not Just For Reading, Writing And Arithmetic)

As we parents, grandparents, sponsors, patrons, whatever prepare to reintroduce our precious charges to the authoritative yet peripatetic standards of our school system, we had best, perhaps, sharpen up our own skills for an effective interface with the system.

I know that many of that constituency are tired, disillusioned and exhausted from years of fighting for quality education for youngsters who would be disadvantaged in any case, perfect 4.0 grade point average or "opportunity room" material. But when State School Supt. Norma Paulus says, "1995 Oregon math and science test results are unacceptable!" there is no choice except to regroup and assail the barricades again. All of our futures are at stake.

A concerned reader and parent of four sent me a copy of my June 2, 1993 column, "In The Beginning Was The Word III: But You Need To Start Early". The lady thought I might not have retained the material, but I have it and would reprint it on demand.

I follow on here with an excerpt for it is so necessary to understand that math and science themselves are no more than instructions written in "word" codes.

This was the education paradigm of even the segregated grammar schools of my youth (see older editions of, 'Taxonomy Of Educational objectives').

"Our teachers and designed the curriculum decided in their infinite wisdom that each and every child [in St. Louis], regardless of race, religion, gender or previous degree of servitude must have a thorough grasp of the construction of the language if to be enabled to function in our society -- and this Before High School, where these tools would be employed in the understanding of more sophisticated concepts.

It was given that no teacher was hired unless they were masters of this craft (and were tested accordingly).

The thought may cross some

mischievous (alert) minds that perhaps in the earlier times there were no teacher unions of the type 'Forbes Magazine' recently described. I described here in detail a few years ago my testimony before the Oregon Legislature's Committee On Teacher's Standard. Our present mayor, the honorable Vera Katz, chaired the process which was so interesting in respect to the concessions it was willing to make.

I told of being surrounded Outside The hearing Room by white teachers who, only then, opened their mouths in sympathy with my protests against Lowering Standards for minority teachers (they said, "not in my neighborhood").

As I said readers, I thoroughly understand that many of you are of that "tired, disillusioned and exhausted constituency". And I am aware that devils have again risen from the ashes and again are trying to institutionalize ignorance and classes of so-called "disadvantaged" for nefarious purposes (mostly monetary).

The educational carpetbaggers never give up so we have a push now for such pedantic degeneracies as "Ghetto Spelling" and new versions of "Black English."

It hasn't been too easy but I've managed to survive the machinations of the gatekeepers, the frightened and the incompetent.

They seem to have a lock on inner-city schools, but I get contracts for appearances and demonstrations in outlying districts and along the I-5 corridor.

White teachers have discovered that All Children can be inspired and motivated by structured accounts of the "Black Inventors Of America" and the many black scientists excluded from the literature.

As mentioned I will have C-D rom revisions available by late winter or spring -- thanks to support from some fellow members of the "Association of Oregon Industries".

Next week we'll explore where we are in respect to SAT and Oregon's educational scheme for Year 2000.



By
Professor
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Burt

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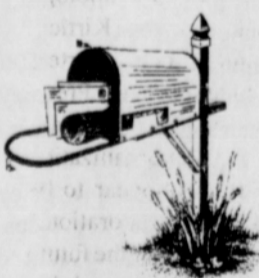
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Equal Lending Laws Should Be Reinforced, Not Weakened

Before 1977, African Americans and other people of color had difficulty getting home mortgage, personal and small business loans from the nation's banks.

It was not unusual for a lending institution to have three or four times the number of branches in White neighborhoods than in Black or Hispanic communities, and to make few or no loans in low- or moderate-income neighborhoods. What happened to change this? The passage of several equal opportunity lending bills, including the Community Reinvestment Act and the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act.

According to federal officials, the number of home purchase loans

to African Americans increased 55 percent.

Now bank industry lobbyists are pushing legislation that would severely curtail the CRA and other laws related to equal access and delivery of banking services.

If passed, House Resolution 1858 and Senate Bill 650 would exempt nearly 90 percent of America's banks from complying with the CRA. The rest would be allowed to regulate themselves.

The Community Reinvestment Act of 1977 has provided a tool for local neighborhood and community development groups to block the merge or expansion of lending institutions that have not met the credit needs of low-to-moderate-income and minority communities. Under the

pending legislation, this type of action would not be possible.

For all of the complaining about the onerous regulatory burdens of the CRA and HMDA, the banks are not suffering but have instead made lots of money from lending to people of modest means. According to the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, over \$61 billion has been targeted by banks to distressed rural and urban communities, and lending institutions have garnered at least \$6.1 billion in interest income from those loans.

Banks are, in fact, knocking one another over to service the low-and moderate-income markets--because they are profitable.

If anything, the equal lending laws need to be strengthened. African Americans are still turned down

for loans at a much higher rate than Whites and Asian American, even if they are of the same income level. Although information on the ethnicity, gender and location of borrowers is available for bank home mortgage data, no such information is gathered for the small business and personal loan markets. In fact, federal agencies prohibit banks from voluntarily collecting that information.

This needs to be changed. After all, significant disparities in the home loan market were known only after that information was made public. There is no reason sunlight should be withheld from the personal and home loan markets.

This is not the time to turn back the clock on progress. It is time to move forward with conviction.