

Child Poverty: Still an Epidemic in the U.S.

During her research for the Children's Defense Fund's recent report "Held Captive: Child Poverty in America," Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Julia Cass visited the Mississippi Delta; New Orleans and Baton Rouge, La.; and suburban Long Island, NY, to profile three different kinds of child poverty. Her trip to Quitman County, Miss. covered sadly familiar ground: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. visited the Black sharecropping community in Marks, the seat of Quitman County, in the summer of 1966 to preach at the funeral of a friend, and Marks was later chosen as the starting point of the mule train that left Mississippi for Washington, D.C. during the Poor People's Campaign.

Cass describes the community Dr. King saw: "Quitman was one of the poorest counties in America in 1960. Many Black families lived in rented houses or in shacks on the plantations where they worked, subject to eviction at any time. The White side of town had



CHILD WATCH
Marian Wright Edelman

paved streets; the Black side was unpaved. The Black schools, housed in inferior, poorly ventilated buildings and using out-of-date books from the White schools, held split sessions so the children could help plant, weed, and pick cotton at different times of year. Many families could not pay the 25 cents it cost for a lunch at school."

Dr. Ralph Abernathy accompanied Dr. King on that trip, and in his autobiography he recalled how deeply their visit with children at a "fledgling" Head Start program affected Dr. King: "We looked around the primitive schoolhouse and saw them watching us, wide-eyed and silent, having been told who we were. They seemed bright

and alert, but something bothered me about them. Then I realized what it was: virtually all of them were under weight, a condition that lent a special poignancy to their enormous eyes." After watching the teacher divide a single apple into quarters for four hungry children at lunchtime, Dr. King uncharacteristically broke down in tears and had to leave the room. Later, he said to Dr. Abernathy, "I can't get those chil-

it." Making this poverty visible to the whole nation became the goal of the Poor People's Campaign.

Senator Robert Kennedy had a similar reaction when I accompanied him on a trip to Mississippi the next year so he could see the poverty and hunger there firsthand. His profound shock and sadness motivated him to act too. Cass says, "Senator Kennedy's visit put hunger on the national agenda and sparked a

table for six million needy children whose families could not afford to pay... The spotlight on poverty, which shone for about a decade (following Dr. King and Senator Kennedy's visits to the Mississippi Delta), did succeed in expanding the availability of food commodities, food stamps and free school lunches and breakfasts. This basic safety net is still helping long-time poor families, and newly poor families losing jobs and homes during the current recession, avoid the kind of utter destitution, hunger, malnutrition, and starvation that shocked Dr. King, Senator Kennedy and the nation." In the current debate over the federal budget, some pieces of the safety net are once again under attack—yet this is one of the many places where our nation has made progress in fulfilling Dr. King's dream.

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dren out of my mind... We can't let that kind of poverty exist in this country. I don't think people really know that little school children are slowly starving in the United States of America. I didn't know

coalition of individuals and groups that produced reports on child hunger, malnutrition, illness, and death and pointed out the callousness of the federal school lunch program that had no place at its

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Obama's Attack on African Soil Was Unjustified

Saying that "It's time for Gadhafi to go," President Barack Obama joined a coalition of colonialist countries to invade Africa. Ignoring protests from leaders of the African Union, Obama partnered with NATO's (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) league of neo-colonialists to "get Gadhafi".

Black Americans would do well not to drink from the same cup of Kool Aid as has Obama. We should be aware that Western media's characterizations of Gadhafi as "crazy" and "a brutal dictator" deserve due scrutiny. Mainstream media in NATO countries have played a major role in demonization of Gadhafi to get the acceptance across the world these imperialists' intervention in a civil matter.

BUSINESS EXCHANGE

William Reed

ted "an impeachable offense." Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan said Obama should have a meeting with Gadhafi and that "you can't order him to step down and get out, who the hell you think you are?"

Obama failed to notice the African Union's caution that "Libya's territorial integrity should be respected" and that "outsiders have armed Libya's rebels to get access to the country's oil." Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe called Libya "an African issue that should get its solutions from Africans and not from Europe and America"

capita than the British. Libya's wealth has been fairly spread throughout society. Every Libyan gets free, and often excellent, education, medical and health services. New colleges and hospitals are impressive by any international standard. All Libyans have a house or a flat, a car and most have televisions, video recorders and telephones.

Gadhafi has been target of aggression from the West since the

1980s. News coverage by Western media is oversimplified, misleading and stacked toward getting rid of Gadhafi. An array of anti-Gadhafi spokespersons, most living outside Libya, has been paraded in front of us. The media and their selected commentators have done their best to manufacture an opinion that Gadhafi is just another tyrant amassing large sums of money in Swiss bank accounts. In contrast to Western depictions,

Libya utilized revenue from its oil to develop the country and its people. Instead of letting people know that Libya has one of the world's highest standards of living, Western media and Obama will lead you to believe "we need to go save them."

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Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe called Libya 'an African issue that should get its solutions from Africans and not from Europe and America' Libyan sovereignty should have been respected; is invasion an impeachable offense?

Black Americans would do well not to drink from the same cup of Kool Aid as Obama; who ignoring the call of the African Union, joined with old colonialist powers to "get Gadhafi." The West's mainstream media is enjoined in telling the same ole story: that Gadhafi "is crazy", "a brutal dictator", that "this is not about oil" and that "we will be in and out quickly." The corporate media has played a superb role piling on in the demonization of Gadhafi toward getting the world's outright acceptance of the imperialists' intervention in an internal and civil matter.

Cleveland Congressman Dennis Kucinich said Obama has commit-

Mugabe was joined by South African President Jacob Zuma in saying that "the arming of the rebels in Libya by the Americans and other foreign western powers is a direct attack on African sovereignty and a clear demonstration of foreign interference."

Were Libya's revolts fuelled by economic issues as the media would have us believe? Black Americans are as foolish as Obama if they try to perceive what is happening in Libya within a Eurocentric perspective. Libya's system and the battle now taking place are outside of Westerners' imagination. Libya's young people are well dressed, fed and educated. Libyans earn more per

Week on the Web

Food dyes are used in an array of foods on the shelves of food pantries everywhere. But could they cause **hyperactivity in children**? The FDA is investigating ... in "National News"



Talk show host and actor Wendy Williams (pictured) talks about her busy schedule that "can break you" unless you're careful ... in "Movies"

African Americans are **losing their bloc voting power** by increasingly moving out to the suburbs ... in "Opinion"

HBO is set to air **season 2 of its hit New Orleans drama 'Treme'** ... in "Music"

Arizona has **executed** an African American man that maintained his innocence since his arrest for a robbery gone bad in 1989 ... in "Breaking News"

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