

GUEST EDITORIAL

By Elburt Lyles

Don't Let Justice Down

I have sat in the Courts of Justice of the Peace Robert Reid almost daily during his tenure of office and I am aware of many pressures he has felt, mainly because he would not allow himself to be a puppet. I have noted some cases where, in my opinion, he could have ruled differently, consequently "pass the buck" and improve his image in the eyes of many, particularly law enforcement. Yet he has steadfastly maintained that the judiciary is a separate branch of government, not subject to pressures of law enforcement, politicians, news media or factions of the general public. I have found that he does not excuse mistakes made on the part of law enforcement, and does not condone police harassment or police brutality. I am sure he is aware that for some unknown reason he has only a minute percentage of persons charged with prostitution and dope dealing coming before his court while the other known violators go untouched. Of the percentage arraigned, there is generally such a gross lack of evidence that there is no alternative but to dismiss the case.

Judge Reid has two strikes against him. First, he is a Black man serving in a judicial position in an era of increasing racial tension. The cries of minorities throughout this nation for an end to discrimination and for equal opportunity are louder each day. Conversely the bigoted and prejudiced are becoming more vocal and sadly enough, some of the latter are in high positions of local and state government, and God forbid, law enforcement. Knowing the Judge as I do, I am sure he wishes he could perform some miracle to cure all the ills of this country and allow it to breathe, but indeed it would have to be a miracle.

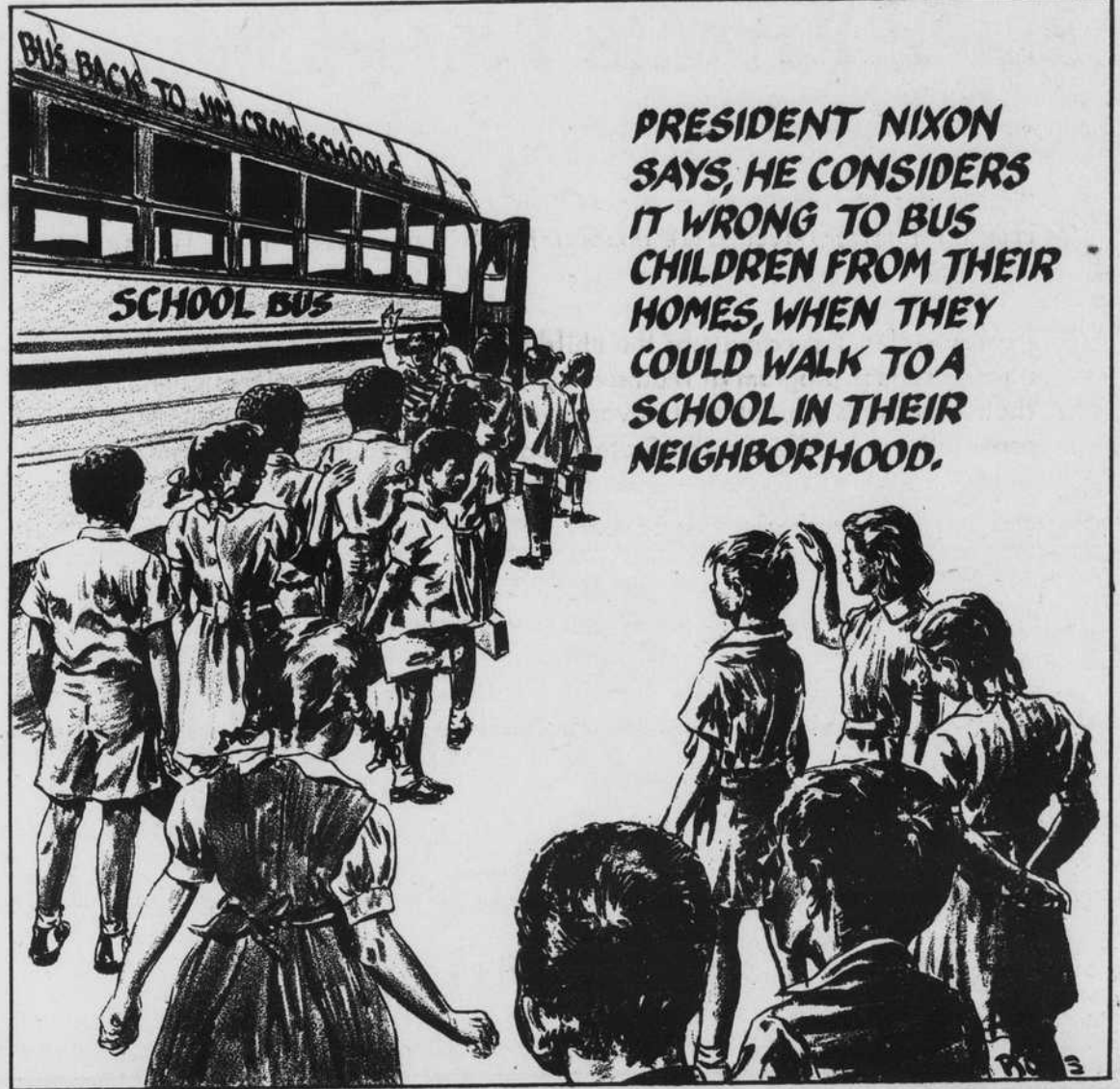
Secondly, a certain newspaper columnist, obviously committed to crucifying the Judge, prints regular articles bordering on slander and libel condemning decisions and actions that in my opinion were Reid's honest and sincere interpretation of the law. At the same time this columnist writes about the fine caliber and dignity of police officers. Heck, is the public supposed to believe that all police officers are fine officers, free of race prejudice and bigotry? If that were the true case, we could do away with many of our courts, but it's better when tempered with justice.

There is every indication that Judge Reid is a victim of "foul play" leading up to the primary election. I certainly hope that the people will awaken to the dirty pool in politics and at least give Judge Reid a fair chance.

A chance to make the Justice Court be all that the name implies, a court where people can expect justice on a strict constitution question, "that a man is innocent until proven guilty."

A court where the judge will give every man and woman the benefit of doubt, because a man is not a criminal until he is proven guilty.

Judge Reid has not treated all people as criminals. It is possible that he has dismissed cases that he may have felt that the person charged was guilty - but he could only try the case based upon the evidence presented, because it is a judge's duty to protect the civil rights of all who come before him. In the Justice Court the judge for the most part is not ruling on the guilt or innocence of the party, but on the evidence presented, to determine if a crime has been committed, regardless of who arrested the person.

"THE NIXON YEARS - CHANGE WITHOUT CHAOS" JUST TURN BACK THE CLOCK...

PRESIDENT NIXON SAYS, HE CONSIDERS IT WRONG TO BUS CHILDREN FROM THEIR HOMES, WHEN THEY COULD WALK TO A SCHOOL IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD.

ENGLISH, NOT DIALECT

By T. J. Sellers

Bright young white teachers from good schools and financially secure homes often play down the importance of teaching reading and the other basic "tool" skills to the poor black kids in the ghetto. They see the effort as an endorsement of the establishment. So much of school time ought to be spent playing the bongo drums or rapping, or just listening to masterpieces from the underground press. But young white teachers from good schools and financially secure homes are not the only advocates of this "do your own black thing." Black teachers and black poets and black editors have joined the crusade to make little black boys and girls happy in their hang-ups with the classroom.

There is a professional recording that is currently making the rounds which argues the case for black dialect, for example, and this presentation follows the format advanced by the entire school of "do your own black thing." Black dialect should be accepted for what it is, a method of communication between human beings. Black dialect should not be regarded as an index to intelligence, or lack of intelligence. Black dialect deserves equal time with the other dialects that are spoken and enjoyed in America.

However, when the dialect of inner city school children is projected as the "language of their culture" and a determined effort is made to justify the "teaching" of the basic structure of distorted English in the formative years, this linguistic approach becomes another innovative nightmare that could retard the progress of generations of poor black school children.

Sloppy pronunciations are supposed to be catchy and incomplete sentences are colorful because they portray the vivid life styles that are so exciting in the ghetto. So a series of "yeah's" and "you dig's," overlaid with repeated "right's" can be used for hours on end

as a fitting substitute for a simple working vocabulary in standard English. This is an academic trap which should be challenged by the parents of the children involved and discouraged by dedicated classroom teachers everywhere.

The advocate of "do your own black thing" may really want to help disadvantaged boys and girls develop a positive self-image and race pride, but this thrust for black dialect actually seems another way of saying that since black children cannot be educated to become literate Americans, a substitute method must be found and accepted—a method, incidentally, which takes black and white teachers off the hook for inferior pupil performance in reading and oral and written communication.

There isn't anything poetic about being poor, and there isn't anything exciting or thrilling about the so-called "culture of poverty" to those people who are poor and trapped in the bleakness of their poverty. And they cannot change their status by pretending that it is exotic and breathtaking to be poor and ignorant and powerless. Perpetuating black dialect is not the answer. Learning to speak and read the mother tongue might be. And I regard the English language as the mother tongue since all of the little boys and girls that I used to teach around Lenox Avenue and 135th Street were English-speaking.

The situation is simply this: The black kids who are in school now will have to compete for jobs with people who have been educated in the accepted culture that prevails in this country. And it is a cruel hoax for teachers or poets or editors or "leaders" to make children feel that a romantic excursion in distorted grammar will help them with this overwhelming task.

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