

The Relationship of the Father to the Family

A Universal Commonality

By Roosevelt Fitzgerald

There are some things which are universal. Those of us who have travelled to one or more foreign countries either on vacations or in association with the military have observed commonalities from one culture to another. There are many to be seen. For the moment we will consider only one and then, only one aspect of that — the family and the relationship of the father to the family.

Fathers, the world over, want their children to be proud of them. They see a continuation of themselves in their children and they hope to pass on their strengths, their traditions and their pride. Sometimes achieving those objectives is most difficult.

I never really knew my father. I'm told that he was killed by a person who passed himself off as a policeman. I phrase it that way because a

real policeman, one whose job is to "protect and to serve" would never empty a six-shot revolver into an unarmed person, reload and fire off several additional rounds. The person who murdered my father was one of those "crazies" who tarnish the reputations of good policemen.

I was lucky though, I had a stepfather who brought to our relationship all of those things which a father is supposed to. I was six years old when my mother remarried. His name was Sandy White. Until now his name had never been in print. It should have been. He did some great things. His accomplishments will not be in the Guinness Book of World Records but, in my book, he's number one.

We're talking about a time a whole lifetime

ago and of a place, which to most Americans, is something straight out of a Vincent Price movie. The late 1940s. Mississippi.

My father, that's how I refer to Sandy White, was born in 1914 in Cannonburg, Mississippi — a strictly rural area. He was the youngest boy in his family. At the time when he was growing up, people still had values even though they were deemed valueless themselves, by others. Segregation, bigotry, violence supported by law, and an almost total absence of ambition on the part of black children was the order of the day. That absence of ambition was not in-born. It was imposed by the power structure which said, in effect, that "there is nothing waiting for you at the end of the tunnel."

In spite of those, my father was raised by a code which has since disappeared: be a man of your word, be respectful of your elders, stand up for what is right, work hard and save your money, take care of your family and always obey the law. Those are just a few of the things he was taught and shown by example by his father.

There was another code by which he was raised and governed. This latter was a code which made it almost impossible for him to abide by the first. It was the code of the "Old South." A code which was sanctioned by law. At the same time it was contrary to the laws of the land because the code was based upon "Jim Crowism." Anyone who has ever lived under such a system realizes full well how incompatible those two systems are.

There were laws in existence at that time and in that place which had as their sole intention not only dehumanizing black people — especially black men — but to force black people to become a party to

their own oppression. They were obviously not in harmony with the best interest of black people nor were they in harmony with the Constitution of the United States. By obeying such laws black people were expected to devalue themselves. By disobeying them black people were harshly punished. Black people could not use public restrooms. Whenever the need arose and they were not at home, they would have to make do with the nearest bush or garbage can in the nearest alleyway. Obviously, this was not the behavior of a lady or a gentleman. Ladies and gentlemen did not do such. Dogs, horses, cows, buzzards and niggers behaved in such a manner. Black people were perceived as niggers for years and years and years. Sometime during that period some black people began to behave in harmony with that perception. Eventually they became that creature. It was indeed difficult not to fall victim to that cycle.

One of the outcomes of that was that at that point in time when those weak black people began to view themselves in such negative terms they began to relate to themselves and to other black people in tandem to those terms. One can kill an animal — a dog, a horse, a cow, a nigger — without any pangs of conscience. They were psychologically conditioned to think of themselves in such lowly terms that they became a greater menace to the race than any other. There are yet some among us — black people who kill and abuse other black people in profoundly monumental ways. We must rid ourselves of them. We must do it soon.

As a young man, my father observed the contradictions of what he was taught at home and what he was called upon to do whenever he

left home. Consider the following: How can one respect one's elders when they are abusive? In Mississippi, during my father's lifetime, black people were treated like crap. That was bad. Worse, yet, they were expected to be appreciative of that treatment. They were expected to convey to their tormentors that they revelled in their torment. Those tormentors were their elders of the alleged "superior" race.

He was in a quandry concerning working hard and saving his money. When he was sixteen years old, the "great depression" finally reached the bottom levels of white America. Black people had been in a state of depression since the Civil War. My father, at sixteen, experienced pretty much what sixteen-year-old blacks are experiencing today and then some. Farm work in the area was hard to come by. He was forced to walk into town — twelve miles — in search of work. Even there he found that all of the legitimate jobs were filled. Even those historically held black jobs — janitors, handymen, and such — were held by white men. He told me of trying to find jobs for white guys because he realized that not until every white man was working would there be a chance of black men finding work.

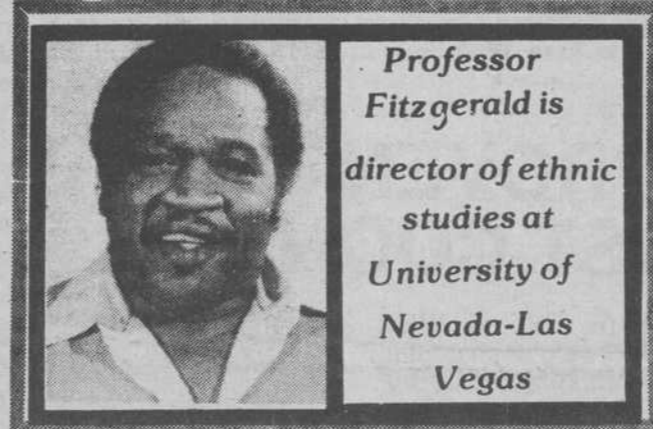
He also would tell me of the long lines of unemployed men and of the soup lines — all segregated and how for the first time in his life he saw black lines moving faster than white lines. The reason for this, I later discovered, was that the black soup lines terminated at a large pot filled with "likker" while the white soup line had meat and potatoes. He told me how "their" soup had so little meat and potatoes that they had all sunk to the bottom of the pot. The man in charge was an elderly white man who always skimmed

the "likker" off the top and saved even those few substantial pieces to be dumped into the already filled "white pots."

How do you respect such an elderly person? You do not. Each day he would go he was always treated the same — terrible. He used his age and his position against my father. How to handle it? Is it not true that one must respect one's elders? Certainly. Should there be reciprocity? Definitely. Finally, one day, out of exasperation, he said to the man: "dig deeper." The man did not. Again, he repeated: "dig deeper." Again the man did not. Finally, my

or but's about it."

My father spent the time he had on this planet basically "killing time." In his entire lifetime, he never experienced a day devoid of racial humiliations. He was a quiet man. We spent a great amount of time in the woods — hunting, trapping, walking and making reed whistles. He taught me to shoot, to drive, when to be respectful and when not to be, that a man never hits a woman — "only punks do that," he taught me how to listen and when to speak, he taught me how to be a good citizen and hoped that someday I would have a country worthy of it, he taught



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father said: "dig deeper, god dammit." He got meat and potatoes for the first time.

He knew that by making such a statement that he was putting his life on the line. He also knew that life under those conditions was not worth having.

He never found honest work during those years. He became a "still" operator and "whiskey runner." Sure it was against the law. So was everything else which was happening to him. You cannot have law when the only time it makes an appearance is when it is being used against you. Respect is neutralized when it is demanded of one and not extended to one. The lessons he learned as a young man about reciprocity he taught to me. One gives up one's rights when one takes rights from another. There is no "if's, and's

me practical applications of those things which I was learning in school. Finally, he taught me how to die. That seems appropriate to me. After all, he had taught me how to live.

He waited until I was twenty-one even though he was in great pain. He waited until I came home from college so that I could be with my mother when the end came. He lay in a dark room in the segregated General Hospital and waited for the doctor to finish making his rounds of all of his white patients and finally, almost as an afterthought, stopped by late in the evening and poked his head in the door and said: "can't stop by right now, Sandy. I haven't been home all day. I'll look in on you later this week." My father held my hand and said to me: "by the time that fellow gets back I'm

NEVADA BLACK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

WHO GOVERNS THE (NEVADA) BLACK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

The government of the chamber, the direction of its work and the control of its property is vested in its Board of Directors, consisting of 17 members:

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Business: The Peoples Choice
805 W. Owens Ave.
648-5040

James Toler, Vice President
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3605 Vegas Drive
648-0539

Rev. Sam Roberson, Secretary
Business: Religious Emporium
1322 1/2 "D" Street
642-0690

James Tyree, Treasurer
Work: Economic Opportunity Board
2228 Comstock Dr.
647-1510

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878-1628

James O. Porter, Esq.
Business: Attorney At Law
130 S. 4th Street
395-3030 or 649-8227

Elmo Smith
Business: Telephone Co. of Nevada
3117 Industrial Rd.
369-3222

Lee Walker
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2121 E. Sahara Ave.
731-2121

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1042 W. Owens Ave.
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Business: Dalton Properties
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873-7115

Commissioner Woodrow Wilson
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418 W. Madison Street
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The membership governs the Chamber. The life blood of the Chamber are the Committees. These committees are the working forces, the units that accomplish their goals and objectives. The kind of number of committees depend on the needs of the business community and the policy of the Chamber to satisfy those needs.

To this date, the PROGRAM OF WORK COMMITTEE is one of the more active committees whose function is to develop and plan out methods to carry out the Chamber's mandates.

All committees include membership and MEMBERSHIP IS YOU. Visit the Chamber's office for any help you may need to compliment your interests.

Location of the Chamber's Temporary Office:
1056 N. Rancho Drive
Contact Person: Gwyn Brown
Phone: 648-0486

SECOND ANNUAL PARTY CONGRESS AT SHAW

The National Black Independent Political Party (N.B.I.P.P.) will hold its Second Annual National Party Congress at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, Aug. 5-8, 1982. Under the theme "Understanding N.B.I.P.P.'s Vision: From Theory to Practice," delegates from the 58 chapters across the country will come together to assess the state of the Party, devel-

op the N.B.I.P.P. program, and establish its plan for the year ahead. The Congress will also feature an orientation session for non-Party

members and persons interested in organizing local chapters in their cities. In addition, special sessions for youth ages 8-16 will be

conducted throughout the weekend.

The Congress is open to all persons of African descent.

CHAMBER

from page 3

seems unlikely that anything will happen at all.

THERE HAVE been all kinds of surveys, proposals, programs and imaginative ideas advanced over the years to bring new industry to the Westside and the adjacent areas. There have even been allocations of governmental funds for the purpose of achieving such aims.

Nothing has ever happened, and we

ministers or the Chamber proclaim.

THE BEST THING to come from the session last week was the fact that they're meeting and talking.

And as for now regularly predictable talk of black marches down the strip, such staged-for-media demonstrations have little or no meaning, and even less impact. Neither the Chamber nor the resort industry here should be intimidated by the threat of such marches.

OUTSTANDING BLACK BUSINESS OF THE WEEK



SUPREME CLEANERS AND LAUNDROMAT, 1376 Miller Ave., is owned and operated by Joe Black. Supreme Cleaners and Laundromat has been in operation at the present location for 8 years. With a staff of 15 employees, they are able to operate 7 days per week: Mondays thru Saturdays, 8 a.m. - 10 p.m. and on Sundays, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. They specialize in dry cleaning, laundry and alterations and operate a laundromat in the adjacent room. "We can handle all types of materials, such as silk, cotton, polyesters — you name it, we can handle it," said Joe Black. Supreme Cleaners and Laundromat is a fixture in the black business community and a real asset to the area. For this outstanding operation, the LAS VEGAS SENTINEL has selected them as this week's recipient of the OUTSTANDING BLACK BUSINESS OF THE WEEK.