

# A Series: THE BLACK FAMILY AND THE CHALLENGES OF THE 80's

## PART VII - CHILDREN AND THE 1983-84 SCHOOL YEAR: THE QUEST FOR EXCELLENCE

*The Constitution of the United States*

*Preamble*

*We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.*

by Maudra Jones

On a deep, spiritual level, Barbara Jordan gave us a profound demonstration of courage and will to "face the truth" and return to the sound principles on which our Constitution is built. Such courage and will represents the dimension of our need today as we mobilize for excellence in education.

You may recall Barbara Jordan's expression of faith in the guiding principles of Democracy made during the House Judiciary Committee debate on impeachment. Sharing the solemnity she felt in that historic moment, as a representative of the U.S. Congress and an inquisitor for the nation, she stated: "My faith in the Constitution is whole, it is complete, it is total. I

am not going to sit here and be an idle spectator to the diminution, the subversion, the destruction of the Constitution." Jordan had begun her statement by referring to the eloquent beginning of the constitution, "We, the people." She continued: "... when the Constitution of the United States was completed on the 17th of September in 1787, I was not included in that 'We, the people.' I felt for many years that somehow George Washington and Alexander Hamilton just left me out by mistake. But through the process of amendment, interpretation and court decision, I have finally been included in 'We, the people...'"

The questions which were before the House Judiciary Committee, at

that time, had to be answered by the "supreme law of the land" and Barbara Jordan "took hold" of that Constitution as she brilliantly led the committee, through her defense of it, to the final challenge: "... if the impeachment provision in the Constitution of the United States will not reach the offenses charged here," she said, "then perhaps that 18th century Constitution should be abandoned to a 20th century paper shredder."

I believe that this monumental example of truth is calling to us from history and reminding us that the sound principles of democracy have, in fact, "never failed us when we lived up to them." It is the same sense of reason that should guide us in answering the critical questions of the 1980's. We must now ask ourselves the question, "Are we idle spectators or are we participants in living out these truths?"

The U.S. News and World Report published in its October, 1979 special edition (Challenges of the 80's) this introductory statement: "... What lies ahead is a decade unlike any in this century. Challenging in its opportunities for constructive change and immense progress, but lacking the promise of clear answers to the nation's basic concerns." We have already wit-

nessed the uniqueness of this decade; what we must now do is move beyond our preoccupations with mounting crises and recognize the fact that we are at an opportune time in our history. If it is true that we lack "the promise of clear answers to the nation's basic concerns," then it is also true that we are "idle spectators to the diminution, the subversion, the destruction of the Constitution." The answers to our nation's basic concerns are found in the Constitution of the United States. The solutions to our nation's basic concerns will come when we as lawmakers and citizens take on the "vow of courage," as did Daniel, and embrace a whole and complete and total faith in our Constitution — a Constitution which guarantees us the "blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity..." When we, in our communities, cities and states, begin solemnly and seriously to LIVE that truth, then we will derive all the benefits of those blessings — among them the attainment of excellence in education.

Educational excellence must be based on TRUTHS. If we make our Constitution a lie, then all of the systems and structures which flow from it will be so.

History is calling us to a higher ground. We must indeed face the

truth that the attainment of educational excellence is not isolated from the societal factors that have produced a failing education system.

The U.S. News and World Report, in the earlier mentioned forecast, asked the question: "Can the United States develop the wit, and more importantly, the will to define realistically and to act on the challenges and opportunities of the coming decade?" In the same report, historian Arthur Schlesinger offered this thought on the immediate future of Americans:

*"The issue is evidently not so much conservatism vs. liberalism as it is fatigue vs. vitality. When the dam breaks in the 1980's, as it has broken every 30 years or so in this country, we will stop proclaiming our inability to do anything about our problems and stop luxuriating in our conviction of public impotence... What we need today is not sanctimonious exhortation but detailed investigation and hard thought. For, when the new age of experimentation comes, it would be useful if we had some good experiments to try."*

In answer to the question, I join the voices of liberation who are providing "investigation"

and "hard thought" to today's needs, in a resounding YES! Because I believe that we all want and need to be free of the shackles of hate, fear, guilt, poverty, despair, greed, bigotry and racism. I join those voices of truth and hope and faith and charity in search of a new vision of humanity — the vision of humanity that, as Vincent Harding reminds us, has always been at the heart of the Black struggle for freedom. It is that essence of genuine hope, faith, truth and charity that we can all draw from our history to guide us in securing the "dam." There are indeed some "good experiments" in human values that could be more than useful in securing the future of our country by putting the ideals and principles of American Democracy into practice so that we can say to our children and to the world that "American Democracy functions in the best interest of all its citizens; that it is righteous; that it is just; that it passes the examination."

Any blueprint for excellence in education must begin at this beginning, lest any effort to achieve excellence be nothing more than an empty triumph.

The God of Creation stands ready to help us accomplish all that is good and right and just in our quest for excellence

### Second Annual Harry Reid Family Fun Run Scheduled

The Second Annual Harry Reid Family Fun Run is scheduled for 8 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 15, at the Las Vegas Raquet Club, 9001 S. Industrial Rd.

The 10-kilometer and two-mile races, inspired by Reid, who has been a distance runner for years, attracted more than 200 participants last year.

The charter member of the Las Vegas Track Club said, "This is an exciting way to show my support for and enjoyment in Nevada physical

fitness events." Reid plans to run the 10-kilometer portion of the race.

For the second year, football great Jim Brown, formerly of the Cleveland Browns, will present trophies to the winners and plaques to the top three finishers of each racing division, categorized by event, age and sex.

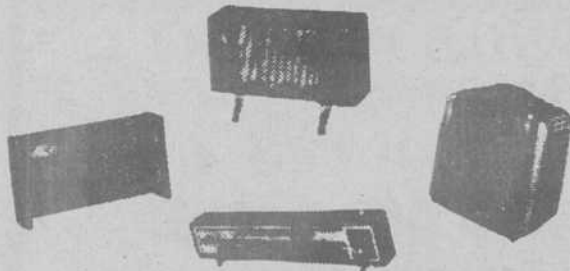
Interested participants are expected to be about 200 this year. For details, contact Janis Miller, 878-4154 after 5 p.m. or The Running Store, 602 S. Maryland Pkwy.

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