

A SERIES: THE BLACK FAMILY AND THE CHALLENGES OF THE 80'S

PART VIII — FOR OUR CHILDREN...

THE QUEST FOR TRUTH... OUR BEST LIVING REALITY

by Maudra Jones

During the 1960's, writers and speech makers were referring to social crises as "critical waves riding the currents of American life." During the same period, which gave way to the "Flower Children" and communal living, the term "generation gap" became popular. Almost a decade later, sociologists and historians began calling attention to the fact that we were indeed losing a whole generation of youth in America.

John Speicher, referring to the youth "currents" in the 70's, said: "The American Youth Bag is overcrowded with heroes... as values diversify and subcults multiply we find a national sense of identity hopelessly fragmented." Our youth were searching for identity then as now — and now they are faced with even more complex choices. The "currents" of the 60's have become "tidal waves" in the 80's — and the forecasters predict that we will be challenged with more

inter-generational conflict, if we fail to find the solutions to today's social crises. Now, as never before, is a time to "consult our deepest values and demonstrate an allegiance to those values." Now is the time to assess our individual role in today's society. Are we "silent witnesses," "idle spectators," "hypocrits" or "moral strivers" in the everyday struggles of good against evil?

As stated by Dr. Thomas Cottle in his article *Teaching Children Right From Wrong*, "We must constantly examine and re-examine our values and then support our children's right to come to terms with their own values, keeping in mind that often as parents we prepare children for the world as it was when we were children." We must help our children see the world as it is.

We must first acknowledge the fact that we are in perilous times. What Toffler wrote about as a totally new social force in our times with all its personal, sociological

and psychological consequences is TRUTH; the youth revolution is a REALITY; the confused value system of contemporary American society that Eric Lincoln wrote about is a LIVING REALITY. It is difficult, at best, for adults to cope, let alone our children. And we take so much for granted. Just as "It is not our status or wealth or address or color or age or sex that ultimately advances the grand values," neither do these considerations insulate us from the consequences of the major social problems and temptations. Let us examine briefly some of the consequences which our declining moral system has produced.

On Children and Family Life in the U.S.:

—2.3 million unwed people living together (recorded in 1979 by U.S. News and World Report; was expected to double during 80's). (USNWR)

—Over 500,000 children live away from their families in facilities ranging from individual foster homes and group homes

to large institutions. (CDF)

—Estimated that each year 10,000 are severely battered; 50,000-75,000 are sexually abused; 100,000 are physically, morally or educationally neglected. (PTA)

—1 million teenage boys and girls are sexually active — more than 50% of the total population of youth aged 15-19. (PTA)

—1 million teenagers become pregnant each year. (PTA)

—Of 24 million children surveyed, one million were suspended during a school year. (CDF)

—Over 1 million juveniles are incarcerated annually. (C&S)

—In the children and youth categories, the percentage of increase in drug arrests over a 10-year period was 1,860%. (C&S)

—The average high school graduate has spent 18,000 hours watching TV (TNECB) of which more "adult" than children's programs are viewed. (ACC)

—1.8 million children in America have no adult home after school. (1980 U.S. Census)

—The level of drug use among young people in America is higher than any other developed country in the world.

—Children are killed at the rate of three thousand a year by "death lures." ("20/20" - Ch. 13)

These are but a few of the startling statistics which signal the peril in these times. We've seen some of these figures in newspapers and other reports; we've seen or heard them reported in TV specials and conferences, meetings, even seminars. Yet, as one

writer observed, the figures become so impersonal, we fail to see the real meanings. We fail to see how they translate into personal pain and suffering, cost and hardship. Except one of us or one of our family is included in any of the above statistics, it is difficult to know how the pain, cost or hardship "feels." It is by the grace of God that we are not counted in any of the above statistics — but how long can we live in a "war zone" and not be hit by even the schrapnel?

We live in a world (or "war zone") in which the forces that produce these statistics are at work daily. ACC reports that for a total of 14 to 16 years, the average American child spends the better part of most weekdays in the presence of people other than their parents. We parents need to assess daily what is happening to our children during that time. We need to always be aware of who and what influences our children's values.

We need to respond to the things we "see" and "hear" around us in consistent ways that serve to counteract the forces that are attacking the family structure. Gardner defines our task. He said: "We must combat those aspects of modern society that threaten the individual's integrity as a free and morally responsible being." Just as we help our children to become independent, we must go on helping them to relate themselves to their fellow men and "to the best in their social, moral and intellectual tradition."

(To be continued)

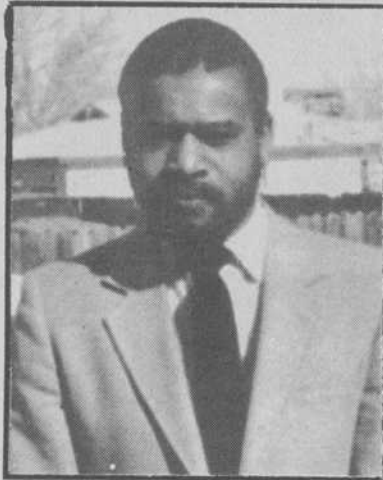
BOB CASHELL TO BE HONORED

Plans are under way for an Awards Banquet honoring Lt. Gov. Bob Cashell for his work in promoting tourism.

The Civic Committee of the Church of God

in Christ, headed by George Ward, is organizing the event.

Details on the time and place will be announced later.



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LETTER

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placed on the economic agenda.

We are working with Southern Californians to not support the high speed train between Las Vegas and Southern California until the Black community is placed on the economic agenda.

We are asking the International Travel Community to bypass Las Vegas during the 1984 Summer Olympics unless Las Vegas' Black community is placed on the economic agenda.

We will conduct some type of dramatization to showcase during or before the Olympics to focus on specific grievances and to show the world the economic conditions blacks must endure to live in this area.

The Black community must have reciprocity and a fair share of the economic system through agreement and project financing in an effort to bring about change in an unholly situation where 40% of Black males are unemployed and there is no hope for the future. History has shown that promised jobs and training alone are not enough to change this situation.

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