

**CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL****EDUCATION: A NECESSARY KEY TO LIBERATION**

By Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

Miseducation and racial discrimination are tools of oppression. For more than two centuries, people of color communities in the United States have always known the long lasting value of acquiring an education as a necessary key in the ongoing struggle for liberation from the twin evils of racism and economic exploitation.

African American leadership must enter the current national debate concerning the future of public education.

In particular the rising cost of a college education makes it increasingly difficult for students from the African American and other people of color communities to have an access to higher education. In fact the notion of "equal opportunity" in education

is a cruel myth for millions of students from communities that have been systematically economically disempowered.

At every level of the educational process in this society, from pre-school to elementary, from secondary to college, graduate and post-graduate, more and more doors have been closing in the face of students who should be given a chance of having a productive life through involvement in the educational process, but who are denied access to education because of race and socioeconomic class.

During the 1992 Presidential Campaign, President Clinton made a commitment to help young people in the nation pay for their college education by working off the costs in a proposed national community service program.

Now that Clinton is in the White House, there are millions of persons who are waiting for the campaign promises to be fulfilled.

There are indeed very high expectations and on the issue of the government helping to revive and redirect our nation's approach to educational opportunity, there is a critical need to act with some dispatch.

Disturbingly, recent rulings by courts at the state and federal levels have not been in favor of the preservation of Historically Black Colleges. The Clinton Administration's position on this matter will have to be monitored very closely. The U.S. Department of Justice under the guidance of the previous Administration did not do an effective job of ensuring equal protection of civil rights laws, especially in the area of education.

We understand the National Service Plan to Education is still on the drawing boards. According to a statement in USA TODAY, Clinton advisors are contemplating replicating model projects like "City Year" in Boston. This program allows students to work on community projects receiving a weekly sal-

ary of \$100 and after a designated period of time, the students, in the program will be eligible to receive a \$5000 voucher toward college. Al From, President Clinton's domestic policy advisor stated, "There is a larger concept here of restoring the civic ethic to the country and giving something back." Al From is well known for some of his conservative views and the jury is still out on whether his approach will actually solve the problem of decades of racial and

economic discrimination.

One thing is certain and crystal clear: "The Civil Rights Movement must demand equal opportunity and equal access to both education and economic empowerment in the context of moving the struggle for freedom and justice forward." In other words, whatever policies and programs are presented, the African American and other people of color communities cannot afford to wait another 12 years or 12 months. We want



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action and we want it now.

Education is not a temporary process, it is rather an ongoing necessity for all persons of all age categories and the denial of access to education to anyone because of race will ultimately be injurious to the whole of society.

**NLV...THE WESTSIDE STORY****What They Don't Know II**

By R.K. Brown

The biggest detriment to the American society, is the continued ignorance of large masses of our population. When an individual would argue about the common facts which I introduced a couple of weeks ago, we realize that we continue to have a deep rooted institutionalized racism, which penetrates every aspect of the American society.

First of all, I am not a leading historian. I can't make up facts as I see them or want them to be. Secondly, I have no great access to Black historical scholars living across America, so I am forced to use common facts which are stored at EVERY public library. Every fact about African life that I have presented to you, or will be presenting, I obtained by studying the leading authorities of the field. They are all WHITE scholars who have found that African people were the first to walk this earth!

Now...when I say ignorant, I don't mean to take offence with anyone. I use the word in the literal definition namely; "lacking knowledge of a subject, uninformed." This is the only word that can describe large masses of the American public, when simple facts like these, along with hundreds of others, are argued over by misinformed people.

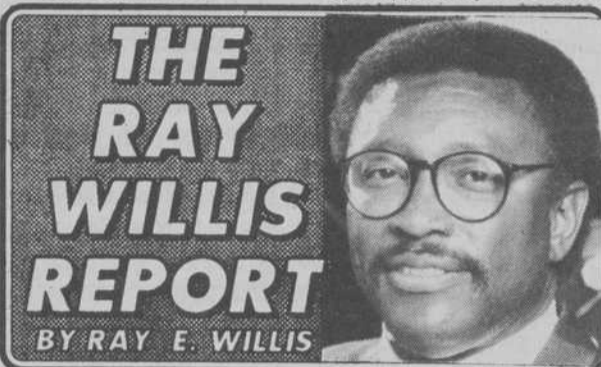
America is a melting pot, and we should all strive to live as

one, but when it comes to education and history for the children of color, strangely the contributions of the world of color, are left out of the recipe! Native Americans become savages, blacks become slaves with no history, and Latinos become borderjumpers, when at first they owned all the borders!

So once again, these are some common facts that some of you might not have known. Coffee originated in Africa, not from Juan Valdez. Beethoven was black. The largest monument ever built, the great pyramid, was built by the African King Cheops. The holy Bible originated in Africa. The blue prints for the architecture of the world's most famous city, was

created by a black man, namely Washington, D.C.

The city of Chicago was founded by a black man. And the first successful heart operation was conducted by a black man. This list would go on and on, but that isn't the point. Until all of the children in the American School system are taught the vital contributions of the world of color, you will always have ignorant factions of the public who will argue about established facts, even if these facts come from the leading world authorities on the subject. But if anyone wants to argue about any of the facts that I have presented today, you can just point them to the nearest library, and tell them that "knowledge is the Key!"

**24/7 AND 365**

I believe in being blunt. Black History Month should be abolished. You read that right. Black History Month should be done away with. It's been a source of concern to me for some time that we "lay low" for eleven months out of the year. And then all of a sudden we come out of obscurity, usually accompanied by stereotypic dancing and singing, and the cooking of soul food—and for this one month we unabashedly bask in the limelight all because February has been declared Black History Month. But only for a single solitary month. The shortest month of the year to boot.

And after it's over, we put our Black history speeches back in file drawer somewhere, store away our African garb and Black artifacts, take down our Kings and Queens of Africa pictures, and blend back into the American landscape like Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man.

For many of us, Black History Month has become the only accepted venue to be proud of our Blackness and to express it publicly.

We truly do appreciate the late Dr. Carter G. Woodson, founder of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, and the creator of Black History Week. Even he recognized that a week wasn't long enough to extol the positive history virtues of being Black. But then when you stop and think about it, neither is a month. A month-long observance of Afrocentrism is arbitrary at best.

Inevitably, as with most things, the passage of time brings a change in perspective about Black History Month.

Community College President Dr. Paul Meacham and I used to tease each other about being in predictable demand as speakers whenever Black History Month rolls around. But what about the rest of the year?

What began as a good thing, Black History Month now isolates Black history from the rest of world and U.S. history. Black history has been reduced to the reciting of unrelated facts without an appropriate context.

I for one am a proponent of eliminating Black History Month and replacing this observance with consistent recognition throughout the year.

Another phenomenon also dilutes the impact of Black History Month. It's the establishment of other ethnic and minority recognitions during Black History Month. Observances such as Brotherhood Week are subtle counters to the focus that Black History Month intended.

Any segment of time can be determined appropriate to celebrate Black History. It's the ongoing, continues recognition of our past that is important to preserve. We all should be directly responsible for advancing our historical significance, not just during February, but 24/7 and 365.

To know is to grow. Until next week.

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