

Point of View

The views on these editorial pages are those of the artists and authors indicated. Only the one depicted as the Sentinel-Voice editorial represents this publication

TO BE EQUAL

ROLE MODELS FOR OUR YOUNG

By John E. Jacob

It's become common to cite starentertainers and athletes as role models for our young people, for good reason.

Such outstanding individuals excel because of their great talent, their hard work, and their ability to focus on the essentials, all worthy traits our young people should emulate.

And most athletes and entertainers have to be able to work with others toward a common goal, either on a sports team or on a movie set — another trait necessary for young people to master.

Unfortunately, too many youngsters focus on the huge salaries and celebrity status, and not on the long hours of hard work required to develop their talents. Others are stuck in fantasies of stardom that can only be fulfilled by a small handful.

Sometimes, entertainers and athletes are themselves confused about what roles they should play.

For example, basketball ace Karl Malone writes in Sports Illustrated that accepting "... the glory and money that comes with being a famous athlete" comes "the responsibility of being a role

model, of knowing that kids and even some adults are watching us and looking for us to set an example."

But superstar Charles Barkley created quite a controversy by saying: "I am not a role model. I am not paid to be a role model. I am paid to wreak havoc on the basketball court. Parents should be role models. Just because I dunk a basketball doesn't mean I should raise your kids."

They're both right.

Karl Malone's view exemplifies the Biblical saying that to whom much is given, much is required. By virtue of their celeb-

city status, stars are role models, whether they like it or not. There are implicit responsibilities that come with the territory, and they should try to help influence young people for the better.

They can be powerful forces for good by helping kids to stay in school, working with community groups to improve neighborhoods, and visibility supporting self-development of the community.

But Charles Barkley also has a strong point. If many adults did their parenting as well as he plays basketball, more of our youngsters would be more firmly

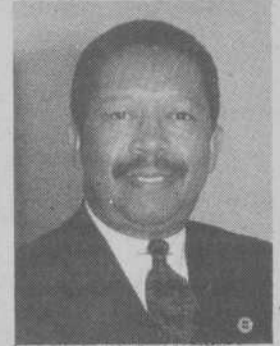
on the right path.

We should face up to the fact that a lot of youngsters grow up without the values and the commitment to make it in this society.

Sure, there's plenty of blame to go around — racism, discrimination, unemployment, and more. But too many of us take comfort in those excuses for failure.

However real those obstacles are, solid role models can show our young people that they can be overcome and how to do it. What really counts is developing one's self to overcome the challenges, not developing one's excuses for failing them.

I recall that when I was growing up our role models weren't famous athletes. They were our teachers, who taught us we have to be twice as good as other people to make it in a hostile environment — and showed us how.



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They were local business people and professionals, who demonstrated by example what it took to get ahead.

And they were our parents and neighbors, who, by word and deed, instilled solid values and strict, high standards.

If celebrities have become role models these days, it is in part because many of the rest of us have defaulted in our obligations to the younger generation.

So more of us ought to be involved in community activities, in school and church activities, and in working closely with youngsters.

They need all the positive role models they can get. And the stakes are too high for us to opt out.

ALONG THE COLOR LINE

"BLACK RACIAL FUNDAMENTALISM"

By Dr. Manning Marable

It was nearly one a.m., and I was sitting in an overcrowded bar admist several hundred Cornell University students several weeks ago. I'd been invited to the Ithica, New York campus to give a talk sponsored by the African-American Student Association. The semester was nearly at an end, and most white students were in the mood for celebration. But the serious black women and men who had escorted me to the bar were serious, determined — and angry.

"White people are basically untrustworthy, and inherently evil," one young black man insisted passionately. "Coalitions with them are impossible. They have always been against us, and our only hope is to build up our own system separate from theirs."

Other black undergraduates agreed, extending the young man's thesis to campus relations. One black female student condemned the efforts by white feminists to engage in a dialogue with women of color. "What do we have in common besides gender? Nothing!" declared the young woman. When I pointed out that this was not the position of black women's rights activists and intellectuals such as Angela Davis, bell hooks, Julianne Malveaux, and Patricia Hill Collins, the students expressed

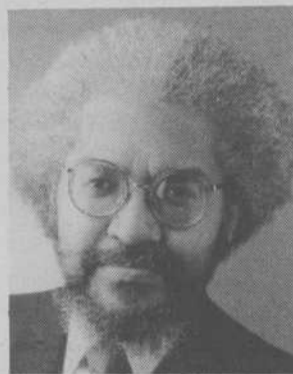
little knowledge of their works. I observed that any analysis of the oppression of black people had to begin with institutional racism, but that it could not end there. We also had to explore the connections which linked the exploitation of people of color across the globe, and examine the class, gender and political divisions which cut across narrowly-defined racial lines. With emphasis, I added that great black nationalists such as Marcus Garvey and Pan-Africanists such as Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah never employed a simplistic racial analysis.

"That was Garvey's problem, and the principle reason for his downfall," one black student responded immediately. When Garvey, Nkrumah, and even Malcolm X are dismissed as being "not-black enough," and when young black women uncritically defend ex-pugilist Mike Tyson as a "victim" of both the criminal justice system and rape victim Desiree Washington, then something is deeply wrong within the black community.

There is a spiraling sentiment toward "racial fundamentalism" among many young African-Americans across the country today. The dominant characteristic of this "fundamentalism" is a fixation and preoccupation with "difference." Instead of being

clear and confident in one's history, culture, and heritage, focusing on our potential and possibilities, we become preoccupied with the actions and attitudes of others who do not share our racial identities. Instead of articulating our own interests and objectives in the context of affirming our unique culture and humanity, we seek to negate and destroy any and all links which bind us to a large network of communities. The new "black fundamentalism" wants to stand against something, rather than for ourselves.

Part of the reason for the new black fundamentalism is the deteriorating social environment experienced by younger African-Americans. The Center for Disease Control recently reported that African-American males are shot to death five times more often than white males, and that the leading cause of death for black males age 10 to 34 was "bullets." But even more important is the recognition that whites and blacks perceive that state of race relations radically differently — in effect, living in two isolated and distinct racial universes. In a recent USA Today national poll, for instance, far more whites than blacks — 74 percent vs. 48 percent — state that the police "do a good job in their cities." Blacks conversely are more than twice as likely to state that ra-



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cism against African-Americans is a "serious problem where they live" — 67 percent vs. 31 percent.

This deep sense of racial division extends directly to college campuses, where affirmative action programs and multicultural reforms are under increased assault by white conservatives. Earlier this year, the American Council on Education reported that only 23.6 percent of all 18-24 year old African-Americans are currently enrolled in college, compared to over 34 percent of all whites. Higher tuition and fees, the financial aid shift from grants to loans, and in some quarters the reaction against affirmative action, have all combined to erode the status of thousands of young black people and racial isolationism has taken root.

Our response to "racial fundamentalism" (See Color Line, Page 4)

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Assemblymen Wendell Williams and Arberry should have the gratitude of all Nevadans for the passage into law of their Assembly bill 209. This long overdue bill establishes restrictions in the use of deadly force by police officers to apprehend a fleeing suspect. This bill brings Nevada law into compliance with U.S. Supreme Court ruling *Tenn. vs. Gamer*, March 27, 85, which

states apprehension by deadly force is a seizure subject to 4th Amendment reasonable requirements. Simply put, the police have no right to kill unarmed suspects. Now is that so hard to comprehend?

Currently there are two coroner's inquests pending, both of them involve totally unarmed citizens. The police in this town seem to escalate minor traffic (See Letter to Editor, Page 4)

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