

## COMMENTARY

## Freedom Day gauges Africa's worth to world

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

No one has really been able to accurately assess the financial contribution which the many nations of Africa have made to the world economy over the past 400 years.

When you add up the gold, diamonds, oil, minerals, coffee, cocoa and a multitude of other natural resources and then factor in the human contributions of the millions of Africans who were forced to provide free labor not only in the United States, but also England and Europe and the Caribbean, you wonder if there are even numbers which can express this financial contribution.

These nations were never adequately compensated, or in some cases, were never compensated at all, for all of this and now these nations find themselves chained with a new kind of burden, that of

enormous debts owed by Africa, Latin America and Asian nations to the banks and industries of the U.S. and Europe and to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Congressman Jesse Jackson calls this "a new form of slavery as vicious as the slave trade."

The debt burden of developing nations is now so large that it can never be repaid.

Indeed, many African nations spend between a third and a half of their gross national product on repaying the interest on the debts they have incurred. And because their debts may only be paid off using foreign currency, they are forced to use money from exports or from new foreign loans to pay off their debts.

They are forced to pay off their debts rather than provide health care or education or



## Civil Rights Journal

By Bernice Powell Jackson

adequate housing or subsidized farming for their people.

"Must we starve our children to pay our debts?" asks former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere.

Look at what the foreign debt means to some of Africa's nations. Ethiopia's debt of \$10 billion is not much compared to the \$11 billion which Europe spent on ice cream in 1997, but it is thirteen times the amount that Ethiopia earned in exports in 1996. Thus, Ethiopia was forced to use 44 percent of its

export earnings on debt payments.

Or take Zambia, which owes \$7.1 billion to donor countries and international financial institutions. It has been forced to spend more money on debt servicing than on all education and health expenditures combined in a country where 70% of the people live below the poverty line.

Or take Ghana, lauded as one of Africa's success stories during President Clinton's recent visit. Ghana's gross national product in 1996 was

roughly equal to its total external debt of \$6.2 billion. Because it must repay the debt first, its power supply is threatened because it has not been able to update its aging and inadequate infrastructure.

Nearly all of its debt service payments are financed by new debts, grants and sales of public companies.

Or take Zimbabwe, formerly known as Rhodesia after the English capitalist Cecil Rhodes. Zimbabwe now spends 37% of its GNP on debt repayment. Despite its high taxation rate (40-45%) its government is unable to invest in its people because of the huge debt repayment it is forced to make on its \$5 billion debt. Indeed, the total foreign debt owed by sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa) added up to \$208 billion in 1996.

Similarly, Latin American debt will reach \$706 billion at the end of this year.

Now religious leaders around the world are saying ENOUGH.

There is no way that the richest nations in the world can morally continue to extract payments of the foreign debt by the world's poorest nations.

Thus Pope John Paul II and the U.S. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the archbishops and bishops of the worldwide Anglican communion (known as the Episcopal Church in the U.S.), the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches in the USA and others have joined together to call for a cancellation of the foreign debt of the world's poorest nations.

Using the Biblical (See *Freedom*, Page 17)

## Carl Rowan's Commentary

## Additional troops mobilized signals onset of 'real' war

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

Americans have rediscovered some horrible truths about war.

There is no such thing as surgical killing in these Balkan battles. So innocent people die. A U.S. warplane flying at 15,000 feet to avoid enemy anti-aircraft fire is going to mistake some targets on the

ground. Thus two of our F-16s bombed a convoy of refugees, killing 75 already anguished souls.

Wars grow wider and more dangerous because enemies—even small-power foes—tend to show more resilience than great powers ever expect. As the United States announced the transfer of hundreds more warplanes to the conflict with Yugoslavia, Defense Secretary William Cohen told Congress that this war could go on until summer.

Meanwhile, Pentagon officials announced that they will ask President Clinton for authority to activate up to 33,000 people from the Selected Reserves, mostly from the Air Force, as the air war against Yugoslavia is expanded day and night. This would be the largest mobilization since the Persian Gulf War.

That means that this conflict will soon be felt sharply on U.S. college campuses, where educations will be interrupted; in the workplace, where employers will lose key personnel; in the aviation industry, from which the military will commandeer new pilots, and at millions of breakfast and dinner tables across the land, where sad good-byes will be spoken.



CARL ROWAN

This heightened suffering within America is bound to raise new questions about why and whether the United States should be in this conflict. President Clinton surely anticipated that when he said to the American Society of Newspaper Editors in San Francisco:

"The stand we have taken, first in Bosnia, now in Kosovo, against organized ethnic hatred is a moral imperative. But it is also a strategic imperative."

So far, the American people accept the idea that the United States and NATO must do what they are doing. The latest USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll shows that 61 percent favor the airstrikes, up from 58 percent last week; and, by a slight margin, Americans say they would support the use of ground troops.

Still, U.S. officials are uneasy with the knowledge that with the harder times ahead, there will be some body bags carrying Americans. The Yugoslavs may become desperate enough even to resort to the use of deadly chemical weapons, the U.S. response to which would be "swift and overwhelming," according to President Clinton.

Will this kind of development soften or harden the American resolve to live, and suffer, in support of this moral imperative? How much was Clinton speaking for the people who now take on new risks and burdens when he said: "We are prepared to continue this effort for as long as necessary to achieve our objectives."

## White youth suffering increases in reverse stereotyping issues

*Barbara Reynolds  
Special to Sentinel-Voice*

Tons of stories have been written depicting urban young Black males as violent, drug-crazed, shiftless and otherwise non-productive. But Littleton, Colo is a White suburb with good schools, two-parent households and working parents.

Communities like that are not supposed to produce alienated terrorists so evil they can murder their fellow students in cold blood. And that kind of reverse stereotyping has worked against troubled White kids, said Dr. Jan Hutchinson, an official with the Psychiatric Institute of Washington.

She said social attitudes and media depictions that paint the majority of White suburban kids as socially well-adjusted and Blacks kids as dysfunctional have created a mythology that works against White kids getting the attention they need.

It seems that there was enough bizarre behavior exhibited by members of the Trench Coat Mafia that thinking adults could have gotten involved. Surely they could have done more to deal with the issues that made these young men feel so disconnected from their peers, that they threatened them and identified with the hateful legacy of Hitler.

Press reports show that this bunch was vocal in its hatred of Blacks, Hispanics and athletes. The Mafia also made its love of guns no secret. In fact, one of the dead men had made his own video at school in which he boasted about the guns he had. Students have also said that the supremacist group came to school in Black trench coats, no matter what the weather, with their fingernails painted black and sometimes wearing Nazi crosses and black steel-toed boots.

Why didn't the guns, the hate rhetoric and the anti-social behavior trigger a response from school authorities?

If those students had been Black hurling

anti-White rhetoric, toting guns and dressing peculiarly, every law enforcement agency in the city would have had them under surveillance. And if one of them had so much as ran a traffic light, he would have been arrested, or worse.

It is a dismaying reality that militia and other White supremacist groups on which kids can model their behavior, are growing without the kind of uproar that accompanied the rise of the Black Panther Party in the 60s, even though the Panthers were, for the most part, a defensive, not a terrorist group.

"The messages that those kids had serious problems were flashing," said Hutchinson, but they were not taken seriously. "Who is paying attention to the young, disconnected White middle-class kids, who have to go to such bizarre lengths before they are noticed? For years I have been more worried about White suburban kids than youths of color. People assume that because the kids are White and middle class everything is fine. We have to re-examine what we believe. What if there are two parents in the house, one or even both could be too stressed out or occupied with maintaining status and the trappings of success to deal with them."

"Take physicians, for example, there is a lot of absenteeism. Kids are getting left hanging out alone or with each other. So, they grow up feeling disregarded not loved. While adults pre-occupied with success may be too busy, those who sell drugs, or hawk guns aren't," she continued. "Kids need people around them who will listen and show them love. Raising kids is hard work and it takes time. But, many parents don't have or take the time."

Since the shooting, several Black psychiatrists have said Black children are expressing fears about attending schools with Whites because not only have most—or all

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