

Pan African Center

NEWSLETTER



The University of Akron

From the Director's Chair

Where Do We Go From Here? 50 Years After Brown



Dr. Abel A. Bartley

Today, my friends, we find ourselves 50 years from the landmark Brown v. Board of Education decision but a million years from solving the race problem. Our schools have legally been integrated, even though they remain largely segregated. Our society guarantees racial equality, even though we continue to see large-scale racial disparities. With 50 years of perspective, we are again faced with the question posed by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "Where do we go from here, chaos or community?"

Clearly, we have made tremendous strides since the fall of legal segregation. Most of the legal barriers to African American advancement have been removed, opening the door for an expanded middle class with the resources and education to match nearly any group in the world. African Americans spent more than \$699 billion dollars last year buying everything they wanted — but they continue to beg for what they need.

There are many voices today saying that we have done all that we can do to equalize our society. They argue that America has opened access to all of the social, economic, legal and political venues available to Caucasians. They point to the size and wealth of the African American middle class as proof of this claim. They say the relatively high number of African American college graduates and the growing number of African Americans entering the professions prove we have made a great deal of progress. We have come a long way, baby, and it may be time for us to consolidate our gains and move on. That sounds good until you investigate the progress we have made.

As King said, "Now is not the time to take the tranquilizing pill of gradualism." African Americans have become far too comfortable with the limited progress we have made. They don't seem to realize that much of what happens in their community continues to be decided by those who don't live there. In his classic work, "Prayers for Darker People," Dr. W.E.B. Dubois wrote, "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May He lift up the light of His countenance upon you and give you war. That out of the dust or battle and travail of soul may shine forth that perfect man."

Dubois was not speaking of armed conflict, but rather, internal turmoil. People need to be uncomfortable with life as they see it. Never allow themselves to be comfortable when there are a disproportionate number of their people languishing in jail cells. Never let them be satisfied as long as there are more African American men in jail than in college. Lord, give my people war to shake them from their lethargy so they can see that every day we lose ground in our struggle for equality.

Lord, give my people war, which will never let them have peace as long as one of their children drops out of school or dies in poverty. Lord, I want war for my people. An intense internal discomfort, which will never allow them to sleep as long as their children are having children and their sons are killing their sons. Lord, give them war, a struggle between what is right and what they are doing. I am afraid that African Americans have stood still while America changed its song from "We shall overcome" to "We shall overturn."

I am so frightened by what I see developing in this world today. I see African American youth who can grieve the death of a fat rapper named Notorious BIG, but they refuse to take an African American course to learn about the martyrs who died to integrate the society.

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Profile



Rev. Joyce A. Rafferty

Part of a continuing series of profiles of leaders in the Akron Branch of the NAACP

The Rev. Joyce A. Rafferty welcomed me with open arms when I timidly attended my first meeting of the Akron Branch of the NAACP, held at Wesley Temple, in February 2001. The occasion was the swearing-in of the newly elected officers, and I was there because of my outrage over the election abuses and the disenfranchisement of African-American voters in the Florida presidential race the previous November. I remember most vividly how she put "soul" and Christian love into her piano playing as she was accompanied by several wonderful singers

Rafferty has been active in the Akron branch for years and is currently serving as secretary. She is the kind of community activist that you can always count on to be there when needed.

She also has had a long career in counseling. Rafferty earned a B.A. in psychology at The University of Akron, and completed a master's degree in counseling and psychology at Ashland Theological Seminary in 1987. She is now earning a doctorate in theology.

Rafferty's career in counseling has centered on assisting people with chemical dependency problems. In the early 1980s, she was a chemical dependency counselor at Edwin Shaw Hospital, and she worked for the Summit County Drug Board as a rehabilitation counselor for victims of drug and alcohol abuse, providing group and individual counseling as well as support counseling for families.

From 1986 to the present, Rafferty has counseled groups of young women, monitored client progress, facilitated group sessions and supervised guidance activities and skills orientation. During this same period, she worked again with chemically dependent individuals at Edwin Shaw, and supervised its Family Program of Education and the Aftercare Program. More recently she has served at the Canton Community Treatment and Correction Center, counseling those on probation and parolees and educating them about the treatment of substance abuse. She helps with assessment and referrals as well as self-help strategies for clients and their families.

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Queen

what stands before you is a Queen
 I came from a pure line of royalty
 see my father created creation
 he gave seconds to time and minutes to age
 he set life into motion
 my father, the king
 and standing before you, his daughter, the queen
 my father tends to his gardens of galaxies
 has backyard oceans to quench his thirst
 my father, the king

and standing before you, his daughter, the queen
 one night he spoke to me, he said "beloved go into the garden
 and gather your sisters, they have begun to get dirty"
 obediently, this time, I walked out on the yard and
 saw my sister in soiled clothes
 babies of the same bloodline, my father's daughters, queens
 and their hair was tousled and their clothes were torn
 my sisters who have torn your clothes
 our father's kings, they answered
 created in his image, I began to see kings spit on queens
 degrade them, drag them from their thrones and beat them
 my father's daughters, my sisters, his queens
 they had forgotten that they could always come home
 and at home awaited clean clothes and a fresh throne
 for my father's daughters, us sisters, his queens
 and as for the kings with our blood in their hands
 eternally from his kingdom shall they eventually be banned
 for they have so cruelly rejected his things
 his gifts, his daughters, us sisters, you queens
 for centuries we have walked forgetting our thrones
 well it's time to walk quickly
 please hurry, come home

for the time he created so quickly
 draws near
 it could be seconds or minutes, his
 hours, our years
 for I have been obedient in beaconing
 you home
 his daughters, my sisters, the queens
 without thrones

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Pan AfricanCenter

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Where Do We Go From Here? 50 Years After Brown

When our heroes and role models become Snoop Doggy Dog and Ice T, I know why we are so fascinated with rappers named 50 cent. I am shocked when I see people who will defend the misogynistic behavior of rappers, but will criticize the preachers who call for moral reform. I am confused by people who get all riled up when a Caucasian man calls them the "N-word," but will say nothing about their own children referring to their mothers and sisters in derogatory terms and exploiting them in videos.

I think we would do well to remember the words of Booker T. Washington, who said that when and where we enter, we bring the race with us. It is important to remember that whenever we do or say anything in the presence of others, we represent the race. Ultimately, your education, income level or where you live really doesn't matter if the only impression people have of us comes from our music, television and videos. The first attribute people see is your color — they make their judgments about you from what they have seen of those in your group.

In one of Frederick Douglass' last public statements, he said, "Agitate, agitate, agitate." He also said, "Where there is no struggle, there is no progress." It is time that we picked up our swords and started fighting again. We have to keep fighting until an education in an urban school is just as good as one in a suburban school. We have to keep fighting until there are more African Americans in college than in jail. We have to keep fighting until there are as many African Americans in administrative positions as there are in janitorial positions. We have to keep on fighting until there are as many African American doctors, lawyers and dentists as there are drug dealers, wannabe pimps and street hustlers.

So where do we go from here, chaos or community? You will decide! Either you will sheath up your sword and go home thinking that everything is all right, or you will pick up your sword and join the fight and gain your rights. As Dr. King said, "We are going to win because we are right. The road to justice may be long, but it bends toward the right."

DR. ABEL A. BARTLEY
DIRECTOR, PAN AFRICAN CENTER FOR COMMUNITY STUDIES

We welcome articles. Submit to:

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Is Nothing Sacred Anymore?

Like a lot of people, I was shocked by the recent Super Bowl half-time show. What Janet Jackson and Jason Timberlake did should have insulted every African American. Now, I am no prude. I am an everyday American, husband and concerned parent. However, I am beginning to wonder if anything is sacred anymore? Between Hollywood and hip-hop, we have to seriously question our values and what the standards for decency are now. There seem to be no stop signs anymore. People will do and say whatever feels right to them. During slavery, they would often strip female slaves naked so that they could determine their value. What I saw Super Bowl Sunday look eerily similar. Somebody has to take a stand and say enough is enough.

I have a 6-year-old daughter who loves Janet Jackson. She does not understand why Daddy turned the channel during the halftime show. Janet Jackson's striptease was just the culmination of what could be called a minstrel show. Black America has gone from Earth, Wind and Fire to Outkast. We used to exalt our racial pride with names like The Supremes. Today what we push forward as art is only worth "50 Cent." Our entertainers are destroying our image. The value that Caucasians place on African Americans will be no greater than the value that African Americans place on themselves.

Some things have to be sacred. I am still angry at Cedric the Entertainer for what he said in the first "Barbershop" movie. I have no problem with free speech, however, there have to be some limits to what we will do. Rosa Parks was not just some woman who sat down because she was tired. No, she was a woman who stood up and said, "Enough." Even with all his flaws, Jesse Jackson is not just some rabble-rouser. He is someone who believed that African Americans were entitled to their fair share of the pie and was willing to fight for it. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. may have had difficulty with his personal life; however, as African Americans, we should never let anyone denigrate his contributions to our freedom.

Since no one else seems willing to do it, I'll take my stand. I am sick and tired of seeing African American rappers devalue our women by having them shake their scantily clad behinds in rap videos. If they want to do that, they should get their own mothers or sisters for that. I am sick of hearing comedians trivialize everything near and dear to African Americans. I am sick of hearing music lyrics that would cause a sailor to blush. Come on people, something has to be sacred.

I am so tired of seeing spoiled, overpaid athletes and entertainers think they can do and say whatever they want. They have nurtured a gangster attitude, which unfortunately is being transferred to our children. There is a sense of disrespect for our forefathers, which has reached epidemic proportions. This prevalent lack of respect can be traced back to the disintegration of the home. When I was growing up, there were certain things that, even if true, I had too much respect to say.

The place to reverse this trend is in the home — young people need to learn a respect for their parents and elders. Then it must spread to the schools, where they learn a respect for their neighbors, and to the church, where they learn a respect for a higher being. Oh, how I dream of the day when I can turn on the television and see African Americans portrayed in a positive light.

DR. ABEL A. BARTLEY
DIRECTOR, PAN AFRICAN
CENTER FOR COMMUNITY STUDIES

2004 Black History Lecture Series Focused on Civil Rights Advances



Juan Williams

The University of Akron's Pan African Center for Community Studies launched its 2004 Black History Lecture Series on Feb. 5 with Juan Williams, a national correspondent with National Public Radio. During his lecture on Thurgood Marshall and the question-and-answer period that followed, Williams focused on Marshall's contributions to America's civil rights movement and placed his legacy in perspective.



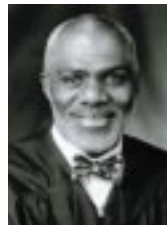
Wayne Embry

On Feb. 26, NBA Hall of Famer Wayne Embry recounted the difficulties African American men had in integrating professional basketball and shared some of his experiences as a player. The former Cleveland Cavaliers general manager also shared his views on rising salaries and their impact on the game — making it more entertainment than sport. He also spoke of the denigration of talent by the arrival of increasingly younger players who have not had an opportunity to learn the fundamentals of the game.



Dr. David Jackson

Dr. David Jackson, professor of African and African American history at Florida A&M University, lectured on April 8 about Charles Banks and the Mound Bayou community. Jackson has uncovered some intriguing information about Booker T. Washington and his program of accommodation. He argued that Washington was not the self-promoter that history claims, but a man whose work played an important role in laying the foundation for future African American intellectual growth and economic development.



Justice Alan Page

On April 22, the lecture series concluded with Minnesota State Supreme Court Associate Justice Alan Page discussing the 50-year-old Brown v. Board of Education decision from a legal perspective and how the courts have interpreted its meaning over time. Page's lecture came at the end of a week-long symposium on Brown and its impact on contemporary American educational practices. Page also discussed the significance of civil rights activities in the United States and how the courts have been used in the fight for justice.

Continued from cover

Rev. Joyce A. Rafferty

Rafferty also has played an active role at St. John's Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in Akron. Since 1986, she has directed the choir and played piano and organ. In 1996, she was formally ordained as an elder in the church and is currently the assistant minister.

Music is an important thread that runs throughout Rafferty's life of community service and church leadership.

"Music has always been part of my life, as God gave me perfect pitch and the ability to play by ear," says Rafferty. When she was a small child, she used to come home from church and pick out the tunes of the hymns that she had just sung at the service. This thread expresses the humanist commitment she shows time and time again in her daily life of serving the NAACP and the Akron community.

DR. JANE K. LEONARD
PROFESSOR, HISTORY

Reinventing Africa's Socio-Economic Development Through the International Tourism Trade

The economies of many African countries are in trouble. Their revenues from exports keep dwindling while the costs of their imports keep rising. Almost all African countries are still trapped in the export structures that were created in colonial times, and they continue to depend largely on the production and export of raw materials that have radically curtailed earning potential on the world market.

For instance, in the 1980s, the prices of commodities like cocoa, coffee, copper and, indeed, most non-oil primary commodities that constitute the bulk of African exports, fell to levels that were estimated to be about 15 percent below that of 1932, the trough of the pre-World War II slump in commodity prices (Conference on Commodities, 2000; Konadu-Agyemang, 2003). The downward spiral in the prices of primary products that African countries produce, but do not in most cases consume, continued throughout most of the 1980s and 1990s. This is primarily the result of the inelastic demand associated with such commodities, the increasing availability of substitutes for these products, overproduction on the world market, and recession in the Western countries and Japan that have resulted in a sluggish demand for African exports. The sluggish demand for primary commodities and the recurring conditions of boom and slump in their exports have created problems for commodity-dependent economies that include difficulties in predicting earnings, and therefore the ability to plan effectively for development.

In contrast, the prices of essential manufactured goods from the north (transportation equipment, machinery, medicines, etc.), which African countries cannot in most cases produce, have appreciated dramatically in the past 30 years. As a result, many African countries are saddled with unfavorable terms of trade problems and balance of payment deficits, which have impacted negatively on their socio-economic development. The dire economic situation has in turn forced the countries to fall into massive debt, which amounted to more than \$300 billion in U.S. dollars in 2002 (Africa Focus, 2003).

The need to diversify Africa's economy and seek alternative sources of revenue cannot be overemphasized. For these reasons, among others, tourism has been identified as an industry that could lead to economic advancement, community development and poverty relief in Africa.

Why encourage tourism?

Tourism has been known as an important vehicle for socio-economic development, and indeed a major source of revenue for many European and Caribbean countries. Tourism is also second to none in terms of the number of people employed directly and indirectly (Hunter and Green, 1995). While the overall world economy has been experiencing recession, the tourism industry worldwide has performed relatively well and has continued to attract investment. It has become one of the most critical forces shaping the world's economy (Williams 1998; WTO 2003).

According to the World Tourism Organization, tourism arrivals worldwide in 2002 amounted to 714.6 million (a 3 percent increase over 2001), generating revenues of \$480 billion (WTO, 2003). These are huge jumps from 1995 when tourist arrivals reached 568 million and estimated receipts of \$403.6 billion (WTO, 1996).

The impressive earnings from tourism notwithstanding, very few countries in Africa have tapped into its full potential (Dieke, 2000). Africa accounts for less than 5 percent of global tourism arrivals and receipts (Matlou, 2003). Out of the world's 698 million tourist arrivals in 2000, only 26.9 million arrived in Africa (see Table 1).

With the possible exception of South Africa and Egypt, no African country

ranks among the top 30 in tourism earning. In 1998, only three African countries — South Africa, Tunisia and Egypt — were listed among the world's top 40 destinations, ranking 25th, 31st and 35th, respectively (WTO 1999a; 1999b; Konadu-Agyemang, 2001). The picture remained unchanged in 2002 (WTO, 2003). While countries like Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe are established tourist destinations (Dieke, 2000), they have the potential to greatly maximize their earnings with more promotion.

Despite Africa's marginal role, tourism earnings totaled \$10.7 billion in 2000. Although in the global context Africa's earnings are quite insignificant, considering the fact that the combined earnings of all the countries amounted to what

Canada alone earned in that year, this figure is equivalent to between 6 and 8 percent of Africa's total foreign exchange earnings.

In view of the immense potential of the tourism trade, the 39th Commission of the World Tourism Organization urged the African Union and NEPAD in 2003 to seriously consider using tourism as the major engine for resolving Africa's developmental problems, in particular those related to poverty, sustainable development and security, as articulated in the

Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations.

African countries do possess unique tourist attractions — from forts and castles to rainforests, sites rich in rare species, pristine beaches, picturesque inland lakes and wildlife parks for recreation and adventure tourism.

Developing and marketing these unique attractions could enhance Africa's development potentials.

What can Americans do to help?

All Americans, especially African Americans, can help by visiting Africa at least once in their lifetime. Spend some money at the hotels, buy cultural artifacts, arts and crafts and other souvenirs from the markets and shops, visit the unique tourist sites and enjoy the pristine beaches. While a visit to Africa will afford African Americans an opportunity to explore their historical heritage and enjoy themselves, they also will be helping Africa to balance the books.

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World Region	1999 Millions	2000 Millions	2000 Market Share
Africa	\$26.5	\$26.9	3.9%
Americas	\$130.2	\$122.3	17.5%
East Asia/Pacific	\$97.6	\$111.7	16.0%
Europe	\$379.8	\$403.3	57.8%
Middle East	\$18.1	\$20.0	2.9%
South Asia	\$5.8	\$6.3	0.9%
World	\$649.9	\$698.3	

Source: WTO, 2002

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Integration for Equal Access to Education: Then and Now

The separate but equal doctrine established by Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896 that established the constitutional basis for segregation stood for 60 years. Although the decision said separate but equal, in reality it was separate but unequal. After years of injustice the African American decided to take action to rectify the problem. Legally, in case after case in the courts, they fought to gain equal access to education. In the process of gaining access through the courts, students as young as 6 and as old as 68 made history in the era of desegregation of public schools, and professional and graduate schools.

These foot soldiers in the battle for desegregation fired no shots, neither burned nor bombed buildings, and certainly committed no lynchings or hangings. Ruby Bridges, a trooper at 6, entered the doors of an elementary school in Louisiana surrounded by hostile adults. At 16, Barbara Rose Johns of Virginia led a student strike at her high school to protest the separate but equal doctrine. And, let us not forget the famous "Little Rock Nine" who challenged Arkansas. In higher education, it was James Meredith at "Ole Miss," Charlayne Hunter-Gault and Hamilton Holmes in Georgia, and Autherine Lucy in Alabama.

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Education then and now

Occasionally, the United States Census Bureau issues a special edition of "Facts for Features" to commemorate anniversaries or observances, or to provide background information for topics in the news. To commemorate the 50th anniversary landmark decision of Brown v. Board of Education, the Census Bureau has assembled data comparing school enrollment and success of African Americans in the United States before and after the ruling.

	1954	2002
Enrollment		
Ages 5 and 6.....	6%	69%
Ages 18 and 19.....	24%	58%
High School Graduates	1952	2002
Age 25 and over, who are high school graduates	15%	79%
High School Diplomas	1957	2002
Age 25 or over with at least a high school diploma.....	1.6 million	16 million
College Graduates	1952	2002
Age 25 and over who are college graduates.....	2%	17%
	1957	2002
Bachelor's Degrees	252,000	3.5 million
Students	1955	2002
Nursery through college enrollment	4.5 million	11.7 million
High school students	926, 000	2.6 million.
College students	155,000	2.3 million.

Although some progress has been made, where is the dismantling of affirmative action and the ever-rising cost of higher education going to leave us?

BENNIE P. ROBINSON
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY
LIBRARIES-REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

What Have Clothes Got to Do with College Retention or Success?

I usually like to write about socioeconomic and health care issues in Africa and also in the African Diaspora. But occasionally, I like to write about the ordinary things that we take for granted and accept as “normal.”

Thus, I want us to discuss an important social problem facing our community — the educational aspirations of young black men. This is a group that has become what Laura Ofofibe, chief editorial writer of the Akron Beacon Journal, calls an “endangered species.” (See “Where have the young men gone?” Akron Beacon Journal, Dec. 2, 2003). Indeed, the female presence on college campuses is rising faster than that of their male counterparts. More specifically, evidence clearly indicates that the proportion of African-American men enrolled in colleges is lower than their non-black counterparts. Similarly, research suggests that young African-American male students are less likely to succeed or graduate on time, especially in predominantly white institutions where African-Americans are often in the minority.

Given this anomaly, researchers, well wishers and policy makers have invested considerable effort in attracting and retaining the few young black men who get the chance to go to college. Not surprisingly, many schools, including The University of Akron, have established mentorship programs as part of their efforts to retain minority students.

While these efforts are worthwhile, one issue that is rarely addressed is that of “appearance” and the possible consequences (manifest or latent) on these young men. To the best of my knowledge, I know of no studies that have considered these issues as aspects of academic success. But conversations with some of my students over the years lead me to suspect that the way our young men dress, a reflection of the fashion of the day, may be viewed by some as “threatening,” which then leads to the perpetuation of the mythical and stereotypical views about young black men.

As a parent with three such young black men, I am somewhat concerned about their academic future. I must admit that my ideas here are not original. The genesis of this “unscientific” treatise is based on a recent article I read in the New York Times (see New York Times, Late Edition — Final, Section A, Page 1, Column 5, Feb. 6, 2004; see also “The Graying of the Hip-Hop Generation” by Dr. Mark Anthony Neal:

Online at: http://www.seeingblack.com/2003/x022803/graying_hiphop.shtml).

To summarize, author Guy Trebay suggested that the major hip-hop brands, such as ECKO, will be showcasing a new class of clothes during New York's Fashion Week: blazers and suits as a way to do away with their trademark track suits and sneakers. The suiting-up of the hip-hop generation, he thinks, reflects the growing pains that come with aging and the fact that these graying superstars, such as Wyclef Jean, founder of Fugees, want to look “clean-cut and mature.”

After reading the Times article, I gladly forwarded a copy to my two adult sons to read. I also raised this topic with some of my students.

Student “X” said, “Dr. Takyi, I think appearance and dressing matters.” He then recalled being in court some time ago and having to take off his “do-wrap” (fashionable head wrap popular among young black men). He was pretty sure that if he hadn't, he would have “landed in the slammer.”

While attire itself means nothing and being fashionable is something to be desired, it also is true that people react, act and infer meanings into some of these “symbols.” The extent to which these negative perceptions, stereotyping and misinterpretations spill over into other dimensions of students' life, such as contact with faculty or advisers, has yet to be objectively explored. But one cannot ignore the subjective dimensions of human nature. Thus, it is likely that a student who is viewed as “threatening” may be looked at differently than one who is perceived as otherwise by mainstream society.

Is this perception an American phenomenon? No. I remember how the older folks in my town in Ghana viewed my generation growing up during the 1970s. Keep in mind that the concept of globalization and the export of American culture to “all those places in Africa” have a long history. Not surprisingly, those of us who happened to have access to the “crazy fashions” of those days (bell-bottomed pants and platform shoes) were considered “bad boys” and looked at differently from the good boys. With the differential value and stratification system in these two societies: Ghana and the U.S., one would expect that the effects of such a view on young men would also be different. This is one of my reasons for bringing up the subject for discussion.



What should be done?

I don't know whether I have a one-size-fits-all solution to the problem — if people even think this is a problem. However, to me, I think it is important for our young men to recognize that they face challenges and obstacles in our society — racism, absence or the lack of parental support in some cases, poverty, underemployment and joblessness, attending segregated schools that often lack the resources of their comparable suburban schools, and high levels of incarceration, to cite but a few.

In the presence of these well-documented obstacles, there is no need for these young men to add things that could impede their academic success. I would suggest that our young men try as much as possible to be somewhat “modest” in their dressing styles, while still maintaining their sense of fashion. How can this be done? Perhaps school officials and college advisers could talk frankly to their students about the possible impact of their dress on perceptions and success.

Once again, I want to hear your views on this topic. For more information, contact me at btakyi@uakron.edu or 330-972-6887.

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Webster defines the term oxymoron as “a figure of speech in which opposite or contradictory ideas or terms are combined.” Oxymorons are commonly used without much thought or reflection. Terms such as “jumbo-shrimp,” “tough love” or “military intelligence” are examples of this casual use of conflicted terms. We obviously know that some shrimp are bigger than others, but none are jumbo. We know that the death and destruction dispersed by the military is the opposite of intelligence.

Diaspora is a strong and united Africa. But alas, in order to remain rich and powerful, Europe and America must continue to rape and exploit Africa. Should the “African American” continue to endure the assault on our spiritual health in exchange for the material crumbs afforded us from America table of spoils and plunder? Or should we identify with Africa and reclaim both our spiritual and material wealth? It is inevitable that in the future America and Europe will intensify their economic wars of aggres-

face of the earth they are automatically included in the European nation, irrespective of which nation state they may happen to be in. Although it is seldom termed Pan-Europeanism, in truth, it is such.

African thinkers who understand this reality and can effectively articulate the logic of Pan-Africanism are shrewdly and systematically kept out of the curriculum of mass public education, even in Africa. Amilcar Cabral, Marcus Garvey, Winnie Mandela, Eric Williams, Kwame

African American is an Oxymoron: We Are Africans Period!

However, let us pause for a moment. There is a second and more sinister category of oxymoron rooted in the human experience. For example, what about terms like “child bride,” “boy soldier” or “Nazi-Jew?” For most of us, these terms are a little unsettling because we realize they are not just a play on words — they harbor the potential for human suffering.

The term “African American” belongs to the second category of oxymoron. Given the legacy emerging from the intersecting history of Africa and America, we must view this term as no less than sinister and a bit ironic. Europe and America continue to develop and prosper based on the suffering and exploitation of Africans and other people of color worldwide. As the Rev. Louis Farrakhan once sang, “the white man’s heaven is a black man’s hell.” Given this fact, how can a single person be an African and an American at the same time? More importantly, how can the Africans who perceive themselves as Americans ever hope to advance, given the tug-of-war these two contradictory positions represent?

The primary contradiction rests in the fact that only when Africa is free, united and socialist will Africans worldwide be self-determined and respected. Just as a strong China casts its shadow of protection and growing prosperity upon all Chinese people, the only chance at human dignity for Africans in the

sion against Africa. Americans will be killing Africans on African soil. Will Africans in America kill Africans in Africa to enrich America where the African is denied inclusion? These are questions that the American media and public education will never address.

Another contradiction inherent in the term is the fact that most European-Americans (not all) view African Americans as more African than American, and as a consequence, are determined to deny us equal political and economic standing for fear of losing power and global influence. What we often cite as racism and discrimination is nothing less than our national oppression as an African people. And let us not confuse citizenship with membership in a nation. We can be born an American citizen and yet not be included in the American nation. Malcolm X pointed out that if we were truly Americans we would not need constitutional amendments to make us whole human beings or civil rights legislation for us to be treated equally. If an average citizen from England, Holland or Australia took up residency in America, they would immediately enjoy the benefits offered by the American nation. These are the same benefits that Africans in America have been struggling and dying to achieve for more than 350 years. This is true because no matter where a European exists on the

Nkrumah, W.E.B. DuBois, Seku Ture and countless others have illuminated the path toward African liberation, but remain largely unknown by African Americans. In fact, it is because they are unknown that we feel comfortable using the term African American.

Kwame Nkrumah told us, “All peoples of African descent, whether they live in North America, the Caribbean, or in any other part of the world are Africans and belong to the African nation.” “Class Struggle in Africa,” Page 87.

The evolutionary move toward African-centered schools, the adoption of African names, the increasing popularity of celebrations like Kwanzaa and African Liberation Day, combined with increasing travel to Africa and the magnetic attraction of African culture, is gradually pulling the African American toward the African end of the polar extremes represented in the term African American. Increased mass political education and an intensification of the fight for social justice will certainly reveal the hollow nature of the oxymoron, African American. On that day the African comes full circle and we regain our humanity, we without a doubt will accept and be proud that we are Africans, period!

CARL LEWIS
ORGANIZER, ALL-AFRICAN
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Remembering Cora Cole

When Cora Cole passed away last summer, those of us in the Akron Branch of the NAACP felt great sadness and a kind of disbelief. Cole had played such a central role in the organization and had shouldered so many essential behind-the-scenes tasks that it just seems impossible to accept her death. Who will be able to fill her shoes?

Ophelia Averitt, the current president of the Akron NAACP, describes her younger sister as the one who always managed the business end of the NAACP at its Copley Road headquarters and who was present at every major event. Cole, who kept the books with Juanita Bradley and Edna Borders, would often say that, "God would get after me if one dime were found missing," recalls Averitt.

Cole spent a lifetime in Akron and leaves many friends who will miss her sorely. She was one of a kind. We all send our sincere condolences to her family.

A scholarship fund has been established in memory of Cora Cole to aid African-American young people in Akron who are going to college. Donations can be sent to Akron Branch, NAACP, 1419 Copley Road, Akron, OH 44320.

History and Heroes: Boys Always Seem to Behave Badly

One of the casualties of studying history, as a profession, is that you no longer have heroes. It is always disappointing to find out that the people you believe in are just as human as you are. We all want heroes — people to emulate because they are larger than life — free of the flaws and frailties that hamper the rest of us. One of my friends used to caution me about researching good stories because we tend to mess them up. Time has a way of changing stories by placing more or less light on the subject.

However, I must admit, I was still flabbergasted by the news that South Carolina Senator Strom Thurman had fathered a biracial child. Even though I had grown out of my hero worship, there were people in history for whom I had developed an intense dislike because they always tended to do the wrong thing, when the right thing was easier. Everything I had read of his 100 years convinced me that Thurman was firmly in the anti-African American camp — he would never have any type of personal relationship with an African American female.

Some people shout things in anger and you know they don't mean it. But Thurman spent his life trying to convince us that he meant everything he said. He denounced "race mixing" as an insult to everything the South holds near and dear. He had seemingly earned all of the angst I had reserved for him and his kind. As it turns out, he was a hypocrite. And, as often happens when you study history, you find a villain's human side.

Now, we have to sit back and decide how do we judge people who privately were different from their public persona? If Thurman was capable of treating his daughter with compassion, he probably privately treated other African Americans with respect.

Now, I have to start all over and look at the stories again to see what I missed. Life is always more complicated than what we think. How do I judge a man who spent his entire life impeding African American efforts at equality, while at the same time spending nearly 80 years tenderly, but secretly, caring for an African American daughter?

Strom Thurman is the South — a region that has never really come to grips with its real feelings about African Americans. On one hand, many Southerners profited by making life a living hell for African Americans. At the same time, some of them secretly developed loving relationships with the African Americans who nursed, dressed and cared for them.

Well, the problem for me is history and hate, history and heroes. How do I make decisions when I know boys will be boys.

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