

The Challenge for Black Students in the 80s

by Karla Spurlock-Evans

Cuts in social security benefits, National Defense Student Loans, and guaranteed student loans for middle-income students, and changes in eligibility requirements for grants, presage for all students—but more dramatically for black students and others who have in general been financially less able to bear the full cost of attending college—a return to a time when wealth primarily determined who would receive post-secondary education. Prior to 1967, black students constituted less than 5% of students enrolled in college, and the majority of these were enrolled in black colleges in the South. After 1967, the percentage and the absolute number of black students in college increased dramatically. By 1971, black students constituted 8.4% of the total and by 1981, the more than one million enrolled black students constituted 11% of the total college population.

A number of factors contributed to the overall increase in college-bound students during the late sixties and early seventies: The Vietnam War made college an attractive alternative to the draft; a peaking baby-boom made college seem a necessary competitive advantage in a tightening job market; but most significantly for black students, a climate of urgency created by the civil rights struggle and black urban rebellion encouraged institutions of higher learning to offer more than lip-service to a nation threatened with destruction by fire. By developing a student clientele from the pool of underutilized talent in black urban communities, colleges and universities could both give witness to their claim to democratic ideals and, in a more practical vein, "get those brothers off the street." But if the move to enroll large numbers of black students in college was principally a response to the challenges posed by the riots in the wake of Martin Luther King's assassination in the Spring of 1968, it was largely underwritten by government funds. From the mid-60's on, college work-study, educational opportunity grants, the guaranteed student loan program, and in 1972, the Basic Educational Opportunity Grants, made possible a tremendous increase in the number of all students, but more visibly, the number of black students attending college. Thus, with government back-peddling on financial support to college students, the likelihood of a reverse in enrollment trends seems assured. For many middle-class as well as poor students, the picture for college attendance—even at a state-supported school—will become increasingly dim.

As disturbing as the impending crisis is, perhaps even more disturbing is the fact that many students—and that includes black students, who, given our history of struggle, ought to know better—greet the future with a casual glance or a faint grin. Black students, for a decade at the vanguard, as a whole sit apathetic and unprepared. The reasons for this apathy are many. Students today were toddlers when the changes in black enrollment began to occur; they can not possibly remember first-hand how recently a college such as Lake Forest (an institution with a good reputation in matters of race) was, in a good year, pleased to enroll one, perhaps two, black students in a class. They have no historical context within which to place the fact that Lake Forest College is among the few ACM institutions that still have a significant minority presence—that, at many, one can count the number of black students on the fingers of both hands. Nor can they remember that just a few years ago, the number of black students here was 65% greater.

Another factor leading to the prevailing sense of futility is that many students today understandably have adopted a cynical attitude about their capacity to shape outcomes in their environment. If, at a very impressionable age, one is bombarded with images which suggest that those who stand up for cherished values and principles are struck down, while those who stand for selfishness and greed are elevated to positions of power, is it any wonder that he or she shrinks not only from assertion but also from adopting any unconventional value-position? In addition, many black students have put blinders on, so that, like horses reined to others in a team, they won't fall or panic if those around them trip or become skittish. Others blindly believe that they are running the race alone, unmindful of the fact that if the majority go down, they will likely "bite the dust" as well.

A number of black students have a sense of coming economic crisis but feel that, with degree in hand, they can squeeze through the crevice and be "home free." But this generation should be forewarned that, even if they are so fortunate as to be continuously employed, middle-class status is no haven from hard times. The black middle class, however socially estranged from the bottom third of American blacks (and that percentage is climbing daily), must recognize the essential identity of its economic and political interests with those of the group labeled "the Underclass" by some who see a purpose served by driving a semantic wedge between what old

black folks might have called "the po'" and those of us "who got a bit of sump'n to give." The black middle class built as it is on two wage-earners, with no presumption to owning the means of production or even a corner store—dependent as it is on employment by government or by the private sector under the gun of affirmative action—is, to paraphrase Dr. Mary Frances Berry, former Acting Secretary of Education under Carter, just one paycheck away from poverty.

In the fifties, Dr. E. Franklin Frazier, a noted black sociologist teaching at Howard University, chastised the black bourgeoisie for retreating from their state of powerlessness and marginality into a world of make-believe and social fantasy. Even so, this group, which recognized and encouraged class distinctions within the race, proscribed as they were by segregation, of necessity cast their lot with the community of black people. Teachers, preachers and undertakers, they could hardly afford to cast off an affiliation with those upon whom their livelihoods depended. And although fortunately one can not castigate today's black student as vehemently for obsessions with joining "high society," as a group they may be even more estranged from their moorings. Most are middle-class by virtue of their education, a privilege recently secured in large measure through the collective actions of blacks and concerned others both within and outside the academy. But because they will be paid by Xerox or IBM,



Karla Spurlock-Evans

they may fail to see that their individual achievements were made possible by the actions of the "folks on the corner" from whom they seek to dissociate themselves. Government cutbacks and a turning away from affirmative action may "heal the blind," but it would be a shame for some folks to have to fall in a hole before they learn to watch their step.

Black students, then, face a difficult crisis—but one which can be effectively confronted if they are able to shake themselves from apathetic torpor, snap out of the reverie of the American dream, and face facts. Times are hard and they are getting harder, but dozing off will only delay an inevitable day of reckoning. This generation of black students are more serious

about gaining vocational skills; let them also once again become serious about identifying, analyzing and directing the forces at work in this society and in the world which shape the course of their lives. And while they challenge themselves and explore the dimensions of their individuality, let them also recognize that individual achievement is often made possible by groups action. Having climbed to the very pinnacle of a human pyramid, only a fool would kick in the face those upon whose shoulder he is standing so as to bask alone in the glory of his accomplishments; he would quickly find himself face down on the pavement.

Wake up, then, black students! It's time to be about collective awareness and responsible action.

Black Students View Faculty

by Clayton Gray, Jr.

The staffing of the newly founded Black colleges and universities with Whites after the Civil War was a necessity if Blacks were to enjoy the benefit of higher education. There were relatively few Black academics; in fact, not many Blacks had had the opportunity to pursue formal education at any level since it had been illegal to teach them to read and write in a large part of the country—as is well known. Whites, then became the dominant force in the education of Blacks in Black colleges.

Nonetheless, at the turn of the century the presence of White professors in Black colleges was a burning issue among Black (Negro) intellectuals. In 1902 appeared a book entitled *Twentieth Century Negro Literature or A Cyclopedia of Thought on the Vital Topics Relating to the American*

Negro. Edited by Dr. D. W. Culp, A.M., M.D.. It contains short essays by one hundred of America's Negro (Black) writers. It is divided into thirty-eight topics, i.e. chapters, with several writers contributing to each topic. The eighth topic bears the title: "Is it Time for the Negro College in the South to be put into the Hands of Negro Teachers?" Three of the four contributors argue for some form of White participation in Black (Negro) education—at least for the present. Professor D. J. Jordan of Morris Brown College in Atlanta, Georgia, writes (p. 131): "...the placing of the [Negro] colleges... wholly into the hands of Negroes would be an unnecessary drawing of the race line, and would very effectually close our mouths against making protest or complaint on account of our being discriminated against for similar reasons." Reverend George A.

Goodwin, a teacher and minister, comments: "It is NOT time for the Negro colleges in the South to be put in the hands of Negro teachers." (p. 133) However, Mrs. Paul L. Dunbar, poet and wife of a poet, as well as the only woman among the four who speaks to this topic, argues cogently for Black teachers in Black colleges. She begins her essay: "It seems a rather incongruous fact that so many of our Negro colleges in the South, whose purpose is avowedly the insistence of higher education of Negro youth, should deny that youth not only the privilege of teaching in the very institutions which have taught him, but also deny him the privilege of looking up to and reverencing his won people." (p. 139) She closes her paper with: "By all means let us have Negro teachers in Negro colleges." (p. 141)

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EDITORIAL

The Black Rap Committee, on behalf of ASAL, is pleased to present the first edition of the Black Rap for the academic year 81-82. Due to a multiplicity of obstacles, we were unable to go to press before now, even though it is already midsemester. Furthermore, we are unable at this point to say when the second edition will appear. This will depend primarily on the availability of funds, for publishing a newspaper, even one of this size, is quite an expensive proposition.

In this issue we have attempted to present articles and essays on a variety of subjects. However, as must inevitably be the case with an unfree people, matters relative to their oppression—which is to say, political matters—tend to predominate. For this we must remain unapologetic and unrepentant. The views expressed in the pieces, however, are those of the authors, and not necessarily the Committee or ASAL's. Our only criterion for accepting materials is that they be relevant to the black experience, past, present or future, domestic or international. Our objective is to establish the connection between these seemingly independent or even contradictory forces. "How can you understand what's going on in Mississippi," asked Malcolm X, "if you don't understand what's going on in the Congo?"

In this connection our hand of fellowship is still stretched out to other minority or oppressed groups of the LFC community, and indeed, to all people who are concerned about oppression and injustice. We invite them to "rap" with us. Finally, the task of putting out this paper would have been more difficult without the cooperation of members of The Stentor staff, who have gone out of their way to assist us when their assistance was requested. We salute them.

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Whereas Black professionals called for the staffing of Black institutions of higher education with Black faculty at the turn of the century, in the 1960s Black students at these institutions clamored for the replacement of Whites with Blacks so that they could have role models. But not only did they ask for Black faculty at predominantly Black colleges, they also wanted more at predominantly White institutions at which many of them were now studying.

In response to the students, colleges and universities all over the country increased the number of Black professors, or, in many cases, hired some for the first time. The results were sometimes salutary, sometimes not. On occasion Black students on white campuses considered the Black professors spiritually not Black enough; at times, however, some relied on them for emotional support. Nonetheless, some Black students turned to liberal White professors for advice. (For more information on Black students and professors on White campuses see: Lorenzo Middleton, "Black Professors on White Cam-

puses," *Chronicle of Higher Education* (October 2, 1978), Marvin W. Peterson et al., *Black Students on White Campuses: The Impacts of Increased Black Enrollments* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Institute for Social Research, 1978), and Clayton Gray, Jr., "Blacks in White Colleges and Universities," *Black Rap* (Lake Forest: Lake Forest College, 1979).

In the 1970s White professors who were not offered faculty positions at predominantly Black colleges and universities occasionally charged reverse discrimination. As to be expected, sometimes the charges have been substantiated and sometimes not. The interesting fact here, however, is that things have, in a sense, come full circle. Whites, who played a primary role in the education of Blacks in Black colleges after the Civil War, want to play such a role again. The situation is not entirely the same in higher education, however, for Black professors also teach in White institutions, where more and more Black students are studying and want to share in cultural events which fellow Blacks at predominantly Black institutions enjoy.

Black Rap

Afrikan Students for Afrikan Liberation
Box 243, Lake Forest College, Lake Forest, IL 60045

Black Rap was founded by Hasan Haken, a Black Lake Forest student, in 1968. Its first issue was published on November 2 of that year and was created in order to satisfy the needs of the Black students on campus. Its purpose is to promote the creativity of those Black students who have in the past desired to display their talents (as artist) to the community.

Editor-in-chief Henryne Green
General Staff Tanji Hale
Lynne Rae Mosley
Gail Walker
Michael West

ASAL participation:

by Meryl Morris

Question: Why is there so much participation in ASAL?

First of all I would like to say that I'm not sure why I was asked to answer this question. I am not a member of ASAL and I am also not aware that there is much participation in the organization. So, based on my limited knowledge, my answer may not be exactly what is expected.

I believe that there is so much participation in ASAL, (if indeed there is) because the blacks on this campus like to segregate themselves. They seem to feel safer if they are surrounded by other blacks and ASAL allows for this. The meetings provide a time for them to get together and dis-

cuss or argue (whatever the case may be) particular issues that are apparently important to them. I would say that these meetings offer security to those that are afraid of the rest of the campus. ASAL and Roberts Hall has become a sanctuary or escape for those who only want to know a tiny corner of what LFC has to offer.

I am clearly not suggesting that every member of ASAL feels this way, but I do believe there is a significant percentage that does. I hope I don't sound totally negative toward the organization, though I would be unable to pinpoint too many positive aspects. Anyway, back to the question. I see one other reason for high participation and that would be

peer pressure. There is an underlying attitude here that if you are black you have an obligation to participate in ASAL. For those who have a hard time making independent decisions for themselves, there leaves little choice.

I could honestly understand the high amount of participation if the organization were structured a little differently and dealt with issues that were relevant. As it stands now, I am hard put to understand why ASAL is still around, except, of course, few people think as I do. Since I was not asked to do a critique of the organization, I will end my answer here.

by Lynne Rae Mosley

I was asked to write this letter in response to a letter written by a fellow LFC student in reference to ASAL and the participation (or lack of) in this organization.

I'd like to add that this proposal was personally appealing to me because of my concern and eagerness in addressing just this issue. While this letter has the characteristics of a rebuttal (and not mistakingly so), it is not a personal affront to the writer of the aforementioned letter.

I will begin by saying that ASAL as an organization has a firm belief in the precept that it's 'members' are the organization. As an organization, ASAL by no means includes as one of its goals (and there are major goals) the segregation for black students on this campus. Since this is not a goal of the organization, I find it impossible to address the issue of "the safety" that its members may possibly feel. In reference to the meetings of the organization, the purpose is to provide a healthy, comfortable environment in which members may discuss and at times 'argue' about issues relevant to the organization. Some of these are: The recent slayings in Atlanta of young blacks, community projects, i.e. Black Weekend,

Career Counseling, and black student involvement on the campus (student government).

As far as the meetings providing security to its members, this may be true. If one interprets security as a feeling that fellow students care about and are actively concerned about their well-being on this campus.

The idea that Roberts Hall is a sanctuary is not totally unfounded either, for many new students (incoming freshmen and transfer students) coming from a predominantly black environment, find solace and feel to say the least, comfortable in the setting that Roberts Hall provides. Personally, it seems terribly unlikely that as a black student wanting to be segregated, I would opt to attend a predominantly white college such as LFC.

I would like to suggest that anyone who questions the existence of positive aspects of ASAL, and in this sense the validity of the organization, should converse with coordinators or members of the organization. It should be noted that while a student may be black, the assumption that he/she is obviously a member of ASAL does not necessarily follow. Many blacks are in the organization and many are not. Likewise, there are

active and non-active members within the organization. It should also be noted that these are not uncommon characteristics of any organization.

The aforementioned writer and I agree on one thing, that is the effect of peer pressure, not only at Lake Forest, but everywhere. I'd say that peer pressure is something with which each individual must at sometime deal. I'd also add that as a freshman I was more aware of the "campus wide" assumption that if one were black, one was a member of ASAL, rather than the assumption that one "should become a member of ASAL."

As to the structure of ASAL, like many organizations, over a certain amount of time there is change. ASAL, I believe, is going through its 'change.' New ideas, new goals, and new members necessitate this evolution.

And as a final statement, I'd like to add that like any organization, ASAL is only what people make it! In the past I found myself being critical, or at least very opinionated about the organization. I still stand by all those thoughts, the difference is that now I intend to do something rather than just talk about what should be done.

Southern Africa: facts and fiction

by Imam Din

"As with seed that has long lain waiting for conditions propitious to the germination that will preserve the species and assure its evolution, the culture of Africa's peoples now springs forth again, across the continent, in struggles for national liberation."

—Amílcar Cabral

During the first week of September 1981, troops of the racist government of South Africa, showing their callous disregard for all norms of international law and peaceful conduct, invaded the territory of Angola and conducted search and destroy missions against the alleged bases of the South West Africa Peoples Organization (SWAPO). This South African act of aggression and lawlessness was condemned by most

states of the world but not by the present administration in Washington.

Where is Angola? What is SWAPO, and what are the South Africans and the Reagan Administration up to? I think some facts and a little role reversal might help us to understand.

Angola is an independent black African nation bordering Namibia (also called South West Africa) on the south; it is a territory which has been under the colonial domination of South Africa since 1920. Ninety per cent of the one million or so people of Namibia are Blacks while the rest are of Afrikaner and German origin. Namibia is rich in mineral resources, ranking seventh in the world among mining nations. Its rich uranium and diamond deposits have brought huge investmentss from European and North American corporations.

Among the major U.S. corporations investing in Namibia are Newmont Mining Corporation, AMAX, Inc., Union Carbide, Canada's Falconbridge Copper Ltd., and Britain's Rio Tinto-Zinc Corporation. The economy of Namibia is controlled by the white minority while the Blacks constitute the labor force. A 20,000 South African Defense Force, and police methods like those that caused the death of STEVE BIKO and LUNGILE TABALAZA while in custody, are used as a matter of course to suppress the Namibian majority. As an Amnesty International Report on South Africa stated, "No reforms in the resent structure will be sufficiently far-reaching to remove the causes of political imprisonment unless the whole system of apartheid is dismantled."

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In spite of resolutions passed by the General Assembly of the United Nations as early as 1966, resolutions calling for an end of the mandate of South Africa over Namibia, and a decision of the International Court of Justice to the same effect, South Africa has refused to grant independence to Namibia. Since 1960, SWAPO, an organization led by Sam Nujoma, has tried to organize the Black population to fight against South African occupation. In the words of Christopher Hitchens of the *New Statesman*, "The United Nations has declared SWAPO the sole legitimate representative of the Namibian people, but its supporters are under no illusion—in this area the South African armed forces count for more than any number of General Assembly resolutions." In conducting its struggle SWAPO has relied on help from the two neighbouring Black African nations: Zambia and Angola.

In 1978, under pressure from their Western allies and in an attempt to subvert the efforts of the United Nations to bring Namibia its independence, South Africa, without much notice, held elections for a Representative Assembly and installed as the majority party its sponsored organization: the *Democratic Turnhalle Alliance*, led by Dirk Mudge, a racist white farmer. SWAPO and the liberal Namibian National Front boycotted the elections

which were unanimously condemned as illegal by the United Nations as well as the West European nations that have been trying to pressure the South Africans to change their policies. Plans for a UN supervised election, in which SWAPO has already agreed to participate, have failed to materialize due to South African intransigence. In the meantime, South Africa continues its efforts to destroy SWAPO, the September invasion of Angola being a part of that campaign.

Today, racism, international acts of aggression, and violations of the civil and political rights of a people are considered as acts to be condemned, not applauded. Not only is South Africa a racist regime at home, but it is holding Namibia by force, violating the civil and political rights of the majority of the people and committing acts of aggression against neighbouring independent states. Yet the Reagan Administration chose to vote against a condemnation of that regime. Why? The reasons given are that in this way a channel is kept open for persuasion, and that the Soviet and Cuban presence in Angola constitute a bigger threat than the inhuman acts of the South African regime. Let us try a little imaginative day-dreaming and see how Mr. Reagan would react then.

Let us say that this is the year 2001. South Africa is one of the most powerful nations in the

world and it is ruled by its Black majority population while the white minority enjoys the same position as did the Blacks in America in 1981. Let us further imagine that the United States has undergone a great transformation by 2001 and it is ruled by its Black minority while the vast White majority lives in the same kind of terrorized and dehumanized state as the Black majority of South Africa did in 1981. The neighboring Canadian independent nation of Whites tries to help the United States White Peoples Organization (USWPO), and the ruling Black minority government of the United States invades Canada to wipe out all bases of support for USWPO. When asked to condemn the invasion of Canada, the Black majority nation of South Africa, a leading world Democracy, responds by saying that it is not willing to condemn the U.S. Black regime because it wants to keep the channels of communication open with the Regime and considers the French and English presence in Canada a bigger threat.

Sometimes fiction helps one to understand facts.

"Race prejudice in fact obeys a flawless logic. A country that lives, draws its substance from the exploitation of other peoples, makes those peoples inferior. Race prejudice applied to those peoples is normal."

—Franz Fanon

Entertainment Around Chicago

(for details, please consult local newspapers or ticketron outlets)

LOU RAWLS & SARAH VAUGHN

MillRun Theatre

November 3-8

"Sugar Mouth Sam Don't Dance No More"

Organic Theatre

Black Ensemble Theater Corporation

November 5-8

AL JARREAU

Auditorium Theatre

Friday, November 6, 8:00 p.m.

\$12.50, \$10.50, \$8.50

PATTI LABELLE

Park West

November 7 & 8

ARETHA FRANKLIN

Holiday Star Theatre

November 7, 8:00 & 11:00 p.m.

EBONY FASHION FAIR

Arie Crown Theatre

November 8, 3:00 & 8:00 p.m.

for ticket info., call 236-4693

"The Mighty Gents" by Richard Wesley

Kuumba Workshop, 218 S. Wabash

Sat., until December, 8:00 p.m.

PRINCE

Arie Crown Theatre

Nov. 14, 8:00 p.m.

B.B.KING & ALBERT KING

Park West (929-5959)

November 14 & 15

BILL COSBY

Holiday Star Theatre

November 23

EARTH, WIND and FIRE

Rosemont Horizon

Nov. 26, 9:00 p.m.

\$12.50 & \$13.50

TEDDY PENDERGRASS

Mill Run Theatre

Dec. 3-6

GLADYS KNIGHT & THE PIPS

Holiday Star Theatre

Dec. 4, 5, 6

"Little Dreamer

(aka Bessie Smith, Empress of the Blues)"

Kuumba Workshop, 218 S. Wabash

previews, Dec. 15, 8:00 p.m.;

opens, Dec. 25th

SELECTED FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The following is a selected list of fellowship opportunities for minority students. For further information, contact Cathy Brennan, Office of Career Planning and Placement or Karla Spurlock Evans, Office of the Dean of Students.

The Scholarship Program
National Medical Fellowships
Room 1820
250 West 57th Street
New York, NY 10107
(212) 246-4293

Consortium for Graduate Study in Management
Fellowships for Minorities
(tenable at Indiana University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of Rochester, University of Southern California, Washington University in St. Louis, and the University of Wisconsin)
Director, Consortium for
Graduate Study in
101 North Skinner Boulevard
Box 1132
St. Louis, Missouri 63130

Council for Opportunity
in Graduate Management Education
COGME Fellowships
(University of California in Berkeley, Carnegie-Mellon, University, University of Chicago, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, MIT, University of Pennsylvania and Stanford)

COGME Fellowships
Central Plaza
675 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, Mass. 02139

Marathon Oil Foundation, Inc.
630 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10020

Committee on Institutional Cooperation
College of Engineering
Northwestern University
Evanston, Illinois 60201

The National Consortium for Graduate Degrees
for Minorities in Engineering, Inc.
University of Notre Dame, Box 537
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

National Fund for Minority Engineering Students
200 East 42nd Street, Suite 3105
New York, NY 10017

American Fund for Dental Health
211 E. Chicago Avenue, Suite 1650
Chicago, IL 60611

NSF Minority Graduate Fellowships:
Fellowship Office
National Research Council
2101 Constitution Ave.
Washington, D.C. 20148

Council on Legal Education Opportunity
818 Eighteenth St. NW Suite 940
Washington D.C. 20036

Pre-Med:
National Fund for Medical Education
999 Asylum Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105

National Medical Association Foundation
1720 Mess Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036

POETRY AND PROSE

THE COACH

He strives toward his goal with his
team night and day

And speaks optimistically, no matter what
they say

He's won and he's lost—cause he's
involved all the time

Perhaps he gets tired of the daily grind

But nevertheless when the whistle is blown

His spirit is running with the boys
he has shown

Yes, a coach is a coach
whether he's last or first

And his shoes exhibit the mud and the dirt

And so as we come to the end of this tale

Let's say that a coach is someone
who has something for sale—'Know How'
by Angelique

Life:

the thin thread a spider weaves
is at the mercy of the wind.
The laws of probability and fate
are weighed on a scale
tick tock, tick tock...
how long will it take
to decide my fate.

A rare disease has evolved
from the master designer fate.
It will strike an innocent girl
and cause her machine of life
to malfunction.
The blood vessels will become inflamed,
her skin will peel,
all in protest to this ghastly,
unfair despair.

An unknown cancer creeps
into the body and soul
of a harmless innocent three month baby.
Her cries are heard only by me.
"Why?"
"Why me?"
She seems fine,
her pale blue eyes gaze up at me,
her plump hand holds out to mine,
nails, hair, feet, legs, arms, tongue...check...
in good condition
Internally there is turmoil —
a slight disorder.
The wind moves back and forth,
check her pulse, vital signs...check...
a struggle is witnessed
swinging arms,
frowning brow, legs kicking with vigor
eyes rolling upward asking "Why?"
"Why me?"

I am eighteen,
She is three months.
If I had known possibly
that I might die at an early age,
would my life be different?
Would it be more precious?
I panic...
I feel a lump on the side of my neck.

Fate is the judge
who sits in his chair,
waving the mallet around in the air,
a hard knock is heard,
a decision has been made
and a price will be paid.

by Mercury

I cannot preach to you
or tell you what you have done wrong.
Who am I to judge you
call you all sorts of names
when I myself
am not perfect in any way?
I only hope, for your sake,
that you will admit
to your feelings,
Become more aware of them.

Injustice is so common,
I am not the only person
who has been treated unjustly.
Maybe it is only me.
But I can not complain.
I do not feel ashamed.
Because I have done nothing wrong.
I have taken my share of pain.

Sometimes I feel,
as if I'm fighting a losing battle
but I know in the end
God will choose those
who have kept on fighting.
I will continue to fight
even if it is a losing battle.
Even when I have lost
a few times,
In the end
I will have won!

Locked up in a basket case
can't stand the pain.
Dark inside
hurt inside
heat inside
Tears,
salty-dry,
sticky eyelashes,
wet saliva
dry mouth,
without.

Trust...
Is it a must?
No, don't bother.
Don't make a fuss.

by Mercury

At night
the ceiling never changes
the tiny cracks form
the same senseless puzzles,
just as the same anger
chokes and frightens me.

My belly juts out accusingly
in the darkness.
Its heaviness pins me to the bed
like a dead weight,
yet the beat inside,
so like the drip, drip of a faucet,
is always steady.

The skin surrounding it
is stretched taut,
pulled like the bow of an arrow.
My tears have collected
in this balloon.
I long to burst it
and let them flow from me
like a dam unplugged.

by Meryl Morris



Drawing by Carla Welborn

MEMORIES

Plans, and fun and situations past
Memories are all that last
Carefully tucked in your mind so deep
Memories are what life reaps
It happened, yes—way back when
memories can never happen again!

by Angelique

THE DESERTER

A run away flees in the night while
it's dark
Leaving quietly lest the dog bark
Running and hiding from all in sight
Fearing the judgment and even the light

by Angelique

A BLACK WOMAN

Mamma, Mamma, hold your head high
Jesus will help you by and by
Constantly praying over each task
Mamma provides with hard earned cash
Mamma is strong and she is bold
Educating her family was what she was told
Would carry her children to better homes
Would prevent the need for getting loans
Mamma, Mamma, rest awhile
We want you to live in style
We're all big and on our own
Through your touch we have grown

by Angelique

Love Poem

I saw the fire burning in your eyes
And I wonder, if the flame will ever cease.
Your rose sits in the china vase,
But, petals fall and beauty dies,
Two strangers, in the night,
Lips brushing, like the passions of desires within,
Passing briefly and barely touching.

Juanita Johnson

If not us, who? If not now, when?

by Khanit Ameen

"If not us, who? If not now, when?" These are the ominous words of President Reagan, words that indicate his futile attempt to prevent an economic collapse, thereby rescuing the doomed system of capitalism. The President maintains that he holds the only key to the door of salvation. That key: Reagonomics.

Briefly, Reagonomics is supply-side economics. It is based on the assumption that the nation's economy can be stimulated into recovery by providing increased incentives to the private sector to grow and expand. The President proposes that this can be accomplished by ceasing government interference in the affairs of big business, private enterprise, and the rich. In a word—the haves. He states that by providing tax reliefs for the wealthy, they (already being wealthy and accustomed to managing it) will in turn take the money received from tax breaks and invest it in businesses in expectations of getting high returns on their investments.

If the plan works as expected, these investments should lead to increased production, which in the long run would lead to still further expansion. If this happens, the capitalist would be compelled to hire more labor, which would eliminate, or at least, alleviate the unemployment problem.

The inflation rate would decline through the use of the same formula. In the first place, the Federal Reserve would maintain its tight monetary policy, which means a restriction of the nation's money supply through high interest rates. Remember, business is to receive money from investments, not loans. But where does the money come from? From cuts in government spending, of course. This means that the tendency for government to look out for the welfare of the masses it supposedly serves, and provide social programs for the less privileged, must halt; the rescue from the perils of economic privation and literal starvation that FDR's New Deal represented, and the hope that all the nation's people would be provided a minimum

standard of living must be shattered; and the hope that everyone would have an opportunity to improve his condition that LBJ's Great Society envisioned must also be shattered.

According to Mr. Reagan, the time has come for all Americans to tighten their belts and sacrifice for the good of the nation's future. He claims that those who are opposed to his program are just too short-sighted and are unable to see beyond the present, to look down the road and see the long-term benefit of his proposals.

I believe Americans are responding to Mr. Reagan's request for sacrifice. The poor masses have a vested interest in a stabilized economy, just as much or more than the elite. Americans have a history of pulling together in times of crises. I believe that if Americans recognize the gravity of the present situation and are convinced that there is a concerted effort by all citizens to combat our economic problems, each will do his part.

Mr. Reagan asks, "If not us, who?" I would like some clarification as to whom he is referring when he says "us." The Reagonomic program, if completely implemented, would affect the people of this country in varying ways, depending on which socioeconomic class they belong to. For the rich, it is a question of whether to invest their money in precious metals and art works, since these are less risky during periods of economic uncertainty, or whether to invest in stocks because the return on their investment is high.

The upper middle class couples must grapple with whether to fly

to the Bahamas, as they do every winter, or whether to use their tax savings and splurge this winter and cruise the Mediterranean instead. Middle class families must weigh the pros and cons of going into outrageous debt, at ridiculous interest rates, and risk complete destruction of their already precarious economic situation, or to end their dream of at least one child in the family receiving the benefits of a higher education.

And the poor? The poor are different. They are not burdened with decisions. Reagan has already decided for them. The poor will not have food-stamps. Countless children will go to bed hungry, wake up hungry, and go to bed hungry again. (Will all of us?) They will not have medical care; desperately ill people will be turned away from hospitals to writhe in pain and will be compelled to resort to dangerous home remedies. (Will all of us?) The poor will be left at the hands of brutal police forces and insensitive courts because they have not the money to provide themselves with adequate legal protection. (Will all of us?) They will return to federally funded job training programs that represented a hope for the future and prospects of self-sufficiency, only to find doors bolted shut. (Will all of us?) The result: the have-nots will have even less!

Now that we know who the "us" refers to, what hope do "we" have? Can we count on the promise that the poor's suffering will be temporary? I would not recommend this to anyone. Mr. Reagan's program is full of ifs and thens. If the rich invest instead of consume, then . . . If business

expands instead of paying higher dividends, then . . . If inflation comes down, then . . . The only certain result of Reagonomics in the long and short run is that the rich will get richer and the poor will get poorer.

However, I am still allowing for the possibility that a clarification of Mr. Reagan's statement, "If not us, then who? If not now, then when?" will shed some light on this dark and deceptive scheme. If not, I would like to offer a few "if thens" myself.

1) If programs like food stamps and AFDC are cut back, then how will the poor be able to afford a belt to tighten, and over what stomach?

2) If man is not created to go without food for long periods of time, and if people are starving, then how does he expect them to look beyond the short term need for food?

3) If the rich are getting richer under his program, then who is the "us" he is referring to?

4) If it is uncertain how long Reagonomics will take to work, then is the "now" in his statement an indefinite sentence for the poor?

5) If Mr. Reagan is securing a lush future for the progeny of the rich, what suggestion does he have for the poor parents who must explain to their children that there is nothing to eat today?

My final point: if the only way to correct the system is by widening the already wide gap between the haves and the have-nots so that the former can wallow in extravagance, while the latter die of hunger and disease, then maybe something should be done about the system!

If not us, who? If not now, when?

David Walker's appeal

by Kobna Babu

David Walker was born in North Carolina in 1785 to a free mother and a slave father. Thus, as a result of the law which said that the condition of a child should follow its mother's, David became free. Upon coming of age, Walker found conditions in the South intolerable for a "free Negro." Consequently, he trekked North to Boston. In 1829, he published his immortal *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World, But in Particular, And Very Expressly, To those of the United States of America* (long titles being the style in those days).

Using a style of writing reminiscent of the Old Testament prophets, Walker denounced in the most impassioned terms, the barbarity, cruelty, avarice and hypocrisy of White America toward the Blacks. Based on his extensive travels throughout the Slave States as well as his knowledge of ancient history, he came to the conclusion that, because of the nature of slavery in the United States, Blacks in America were "the most degraded, wretched, and abject set of beings that ever lived since the world began." He urged the slaves to cast off the yoke of oppression.

Deeply religious, Walker prophesied the wrath of God upon Americans unless they turned from their wicked ways. Unlike the God that the slave-masters preached about to the slaves, Walker's God is the champion of the unfree and the oppressed. Who, in due course, will loose the lightning of His terrible swift sword against the oppressor. "Can Americans," he asked, "escape God Almighty? If they do, can He be to us a God of Justice?"

Addressing himself now to those of his fellow "free" brethren who, while abandoning the greater part of the Blacks to the tender mer-

cies of the slave-driver, declared themselves "completely happy" with the status quo (i.e., the negro bourgeoisie of those days), Walker opined: "I advance it therefore to you, not as a problematical, but as an unshaken and forever immovable fact, that your full glory and happiness as well as all other coloured people under Heaven, shall never be fully consummated, but with the entire emancipation of your enslaved brethren all over the world." (Walker's emphasis.) It is not without some justification, then, that some authorities profess to see in Walker's *Appeal* the origin of Pan-African thought. However that may be, this much is certain, in a hundred and fifty years the passion of David Walker has never been equalled, much less surpassed. Indeed, it may never be surpassed.

Walker's *Appeal* occasioned considerable anxiety in slaveholding circles. Its circulation in the South alarmed governors and mayors. Appeals were made to the mayor of Boston to put an end to the distribution of this "highly inflammatory" work. A reward of a thousand dollars was offered for the author's head, and ten thousand dollars if he were delivered alive. Walker was urged to flee to Canada, but instead he decided to make his stand in Boston. Thus it was that in 1830 he died of "poisoning"—the poison of treachery.

Clearly, then—as now—those in America who would build power and economic prosperity through the exploitation of blacks and other oppressed groups would go to any length to preserve their system of domination. But David Walker's life stands as a clear reminder to us that then—as now—there are those who would resist oppression with every fiber of their being.

Nigerian Constitutionalism

by Chris Mojekwu

Nigeria is the largest of all former British possessions on the African continent. Its size is that of Texas and Oklahoma put together. On January 1, 1900, the British Crown took over from the British commercial companies the official administration of what today is the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Britain did not give this territory up till October 1, 1960. Throughout this period English law and British constitutional practices were gradually introduced into the country's political administration.

It is quite often forgotten that Nigeria is a heterogeneous society. It is composed of different nations, city-states and kinship societies. Each ethnic group or nation has its own history, language, custom, religion and culture. From the time of its colonial inception onward, the British Crown created barriers between the major ethnic groups. It administered the Islamic states and Emirates of the northern half of the territory as the protectorate of Northern Nigeria, while it administered the coastal belt and the forested hinterland states and societies as the protectorate of Southern Nigeria. The cultural differences between the several

ethnic groups in the territory and the north-south administrative division have continued to be at the bottom of the major political problems of Nigeria. Although Nigeria became independent and a full member of the United Nations Organization in 1960, the ethnic nationalities had not, themselves come together as one people or developed a true sense of belonging to the Nigerian nation. Political parties and loyalty were largely based on tribal affiliation. Consequently, Nigeria, at the time of independence, had not produced a national leader who was able to galvanize the peoples of Nigeria into one nation.

A few years before independence, the British carved out a federal structure based on the three major ethnic groups in the country: The Hausa/Fulani group of the North; the Igbos of the East and Yorubas of the West. The domineering attitude of these three tribes in their respective regional governments generated intolerance and lack of respect for other component governments of the federation. There were several incidents in which minority tribes were trampled upon, and human rights were often violated. Nigerians who belong to one region were often treated as stranger and non-nationals in other

regions. In many cases, people had no right to own property outside their own region. At one time the Premier or head of government of one region could not, as the leader of a national political party, travel to another region on a political campaign. Several lawyers belonging to an ethnic group were chased out of another region (not being their own) although they were there on professional duty to protect the civil rights of their clients.

It was, therefore, not so much of a surprise that in January 1966, a handful of young colonels in the army toppled the first republic. The generality of the people and the press hailed them as "the saviors of the people."

A military counter-coup in July 1966 led to the mass killing of Igbos in the Northern region. This in turn led to the appearance of a secessionist group in the East (where the Igbos predominate) which declared the independent state of Biafra. The aftermath of the 30-months civil war, and the military rule of Nigeria between 1970 and 1978, it appears, has been a time of reflection for all Nigerians. It is to the credit of the military rulers that a new constitution was, in 1976, drafted by a 50-man special drafting committee.

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The life and times of Walter Rodney

by Michael West

The traditional European-American view is that Africa is the "Dark Continent" that waited for Europeans to bring the light. But thanks to the labors of African (as well as some European) historians, this view is today widely discredited. Now the general outline of African history has been sketched, and the remaining gaps are being rapidly filled. The mission of the African historian can no longer be to prove the existence of ancient African civilizations to the white world, but rather to employ history in the service of the movement which seeks the economic, cultural, as well as political liberation of Africa and Africans everywhere.

At this juncture, this view might be unacceptable to those who consider the role of this historian to be simply one of recording "facts." The upshot here is that the interpretation of history, insofar as this is desirable, ought to be left to the social reformer or the prophet, offices which the historian cannot rightfully usurp. And, indeed, this ideal (though in reality never attained) might be fine for those who have already arrived. But where the unfree and the oppressed are concerned, there is no such thing as history for its own sake. On these matters, the views of the oppressed must necessarily differ from those of the oppressor. For the African historian—while ensuring the integrity of his sources—must in all his endeavors, seek to effect the complete liberation of his people.

The synthesis of intellectual honesty and an unabashed commitment to the people's struggle which is presently being urged finds a most vivid illustration in the life of Walter Rodney, 1942-1980 Rodney is best known as the author of the book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. But perhaps his most outstanding contribution to African history is his *History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800*. (for which he received a Ph.D. degree from London University in 1966). The latter work, in addition to filling an important gap in the history of West Africa

generally, reaches some conclusions that are as topical as they are seminal. For instance, it shows the enormous influence of the interior upon the coast (where Europeans did business), and the primacy of class over tribe in the geo-political composition of the area.

Rodney followed the materialist approach to history. According to this view, in order to appreciate the present and prepare for the future, it is necessary to understand the past. This perspective is especially evident in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. In this work, Rodney traces the history of Euro-African relations from the period of contact (in the 15th century) down to the end of the Colonial era (1960). Generally speaking, this is the history of the African slave-trade to the Americas, followed directly by European colonialism, both enterprises undertaken by Europeans for the benefit of Europeans.

It is Rodney's contention that there is a dialectical relationship between economic development in Europe and economic underdevelopment in Africa. He wrote: "The developed and underdeveloped parts of the present capitalist sections of this world have been in continuous contact for four and a half centuries. The contention here is that over that period Africa helped to develop Western Europe in the same proportion that Western Europe helped to undevelop Africa." This assertion is supported by a considerable body of evidence, the validity of which dogma cannot refute.

Since "independence" African leaders have been going around in what is sometimes called "the vicious circle of poverty," seeking ways to break out of it—all to no avail. But Dr. Rodney's conclusion established that "African development is possible only on the basis of a radical break with the international capitalistic system, which has been the principal agency of underdevelopment of Africa over the last five centuries." Only the African elite, junior partners of imperialism in the contin-

ued exploitation of African resources (human and material) and those Africans who still retain a "colonial mentality" would question the correctness of this conclusion. Surely Dr. Rodney has made a major contribution to African historiography.

Yet Rodney was a product of the Carribean who had a strong affinity to the masses of that unfortunate region of the world. It was another great Pan-Africanist historian from the Caribbean, C.L.R. James, who said that West Indian liberation lay through Africa. Rodney knew this. In the preface to his dissertation (published in 1969), he expressed the customary gratitude to his advisors. But, he continued: "My debt is greatest to the irredentist masses of the British Caribbean, who provided inspiration and finances (via the University of the West Indies)." He might not have foreseen then that this debt would be paid with his life.

Rodney's persecution at the hands of the Caribbean bourgeoisie dates back to 1968. While on the faculty of the University of the West Indies, Jamaica, Rodney attempted to pay his debt to the "irredentist masses." He went into the "dungeons" and slums of Kingston and "grounded" with his brothers—hence the book *Groundings with my Brothers*. But it is a crime for an intellectual to "ground" with anyone other than the petty bourgeoisie in the Caribbean. Consequently, Rodney was de-

clared *Persona non Grata* by the Jamaican government while he was in Canada attending a conference. Subsequently, he went to Tanzania where he lived and worked until 1974.

After the Sixth Pan-African Congress in Tanzania in 1974, Rodney returned to his homeland of Guyana to take up an appointment as Professor of History at the national university. However, the appointment, for which he was obviously eminently qualified, was cancelled by the Prime Minister, L. Forbes Burnham.

Undaunted, Rodney plunged himself into the struggle against the highly unpopular Burnham regime. Mr. Burnham had originally been installed in 1966 with American CIA and British support. Eventually he became a "socialist," and then a "Marxist-Leninist"! But this Western prodigal son later abandoned both "socialism" and "Marxism-Leninism" and returned to the imperialist fold. He adopted the trappings and tactics of a regular South American dictator, which were better suited to his style and temperament.

Up to the time that Rodney entered into the political arena, Guyanese politics was characterized by ethnic divisiveness. But Rodney set out to span the ethnic chasm and unite the broad working masses on the basis of their fundamental social and economic interests and their opposition to dictatorship. Due primarily to his

efforts, four separate African and East Indian organizations coalesced into the Working People's Alliance (WPA). In short order, the WPA became the leading opposition force in Guyana.

Unlike so many ivory-tower intellectuals, Rodney could not stand idly by and philosophize about oppression. On the contrary, he had to make his personal contribution to the struggle against oppression. It is rare, indeed, that an intellectual comes to the following conviction: "I might begin to question myself and doubt my conclusions and my creditability if, in a situation which requires a certain type of action, it is dictated logically by a mode of analysis and I shrink from that action." A struggle was required and he rose to the occasion.

It was against this political backdrop, then, that Rodney set out to pen a history of the Guyanese working class. This project was intended to be a two-volume work, the present one, *A History of the Guyanese Working Class, 1881-1905*, being the first volume. But he had only completed one volume (and even that had to be published posthumously) when he fell victim to the bomb of the assassins of the government. Rodney's death is a loss for which the struggles of the African and Caribbean masses, on the one hand, and historical scholarship, on the other, will be the poorer. Of the one he was an articulate spokesman, and of the other a perspicacious writer.

A disease of racism

by Natalie Hutchinson

There is a serious disease running rampant throughout the world causing a great amount of destruction and loss. It has caused many riots, wars, assassinations and attempted assassinations. Its name: Racism. Racism is the belief that a particular race (that of the racist) is, in every way, shape and form, superior to all other races.

The causes of this disease are ignorance and insecurity. Racists are ignorant. They generally know nothing about the group of people whom they dislike. Their lack of understanding and knowledge causes fear, and their fear is expressed through hatred. Hatred in turn causes the major symptom of the disease—Racial Oppression. The numerous methods of racial oppression expose the racist's basic insecurity, his feelings of incompetence and lack of confidence. By preventing members of certain racial or ethnic groups from acquiring adequate housing and health care, and by employing racially discriminatory educational and occupational policies, the racist is able to keep the group discriminated against at a considerable disadvantage *vis-a-vis* his own group. Thus the success of his own group is ensured, while others are condemned to failure.

If racist beliefs were true, however, there would be no need for

racial oppression. The racist's group would succeed by virtue of its inherent superiority, while the others would be unable to compete by virtue of their inherent inferiority. Deep within the racist knows that there are no valid reasons to believe in his own superiority or the inferiority of others. Yet he must hold tenaciously to his beliefs because he is unable to judge his own worth and success independently. He can only judge them in a relative sense—in comparison with others. But if the progress of his competitors is impeded, he will invariably rise to the top.

Racism, like alcoholism, is a very self-destructive disease. A racist hurts himself as well as

others. The continuous belief in an untruth creates many conflicts, internally and externally. The racist's distorted view of reality severely limits his personal awareness. Consequently, his emotional growth is stunted. Those who suffer the greatest from racial oppression, however, are the oppressed. The latter are no longer willing to tolerate their fellow man's disease, and are now demanding just treatment. Like the cure for many diseases, the treatment in severe cases may be very unpleasant.

The sad fact, though, is that racists—like many others with social diseases—rarely know that they are sick.

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tee. A constituent assembly of 223 men and women — Nigerians — debated the draft constitution for eight months. On September 30, 1978, the military rulers promulgated Decree No. 25, thus providing a new constitution for Nigeria.

The major strength of the constitution is that it is a successful attempt by the Nigerians themselves. Its strength is that it is "homegrown," the work of Nigerian constitutional experts, lawyers, political and social scientists, businessmen and educators. It was debated and tossed around by politicians, market women, traders, chiefs and people representing various ethnic groups in Nigeria.

The authors of the draft constitution took into consideration the remote and most immediate experiences of the Nigerian society, the abuse of power, the discrimi-

natory practices and the causes that led to the fall of the first Republic and the civil war. They were resolved to provide as much as was humanly possible, predetermined rules that would check arbitrary use of power by any government, create a healthy environment for the development of democratic ideas, provide for unity among the ethnics in Nigeria, provide for dynamic political leadership, protect human rights and uphold the rule of law in a developing society.

It certainly looks as if Nigeria has learned a salutary lesson from its past experiences. The civil war perhaps was fought in vain. Nigerians have designed their constitution by limiting the arbitrariness of their government and by the use of predetermined rules borrowed from other constitutional systems.

Sports, sports, sports

by Joseph Campbell

Sports are exciting to watch and fun to play, but aside from this sports are also dangerous. One may often wonder why in the name of sanity would anyone play SPORTS!

Well, S is for the SAVAGE beast in us that arises when athletic competition draws near. P is for the POWER that enables one to jump and dunk, skate and glide, or swing and hit. O is for the OATMEAL our mother made us eat so that we could grow up like Jim Brown, Wilt Chamberlin, Babe Ruth, and the list goes on. R

is for REMEMBERING what the coach said Tuesday that contradicted Monday so that performance is correct Wednesday. T is for the TIGHT muscles obtained from the coach that makes an athlete run until he gets tired. S is for the SOUND of trumpets when you win or the familiar STATEMENT, "Oh! I heard you guys lost," if you lose. Now that we know why sports are played let's have a winning season in all sports at LFC. Remember it's not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game, so let's play the game to win.