THE WITNESS
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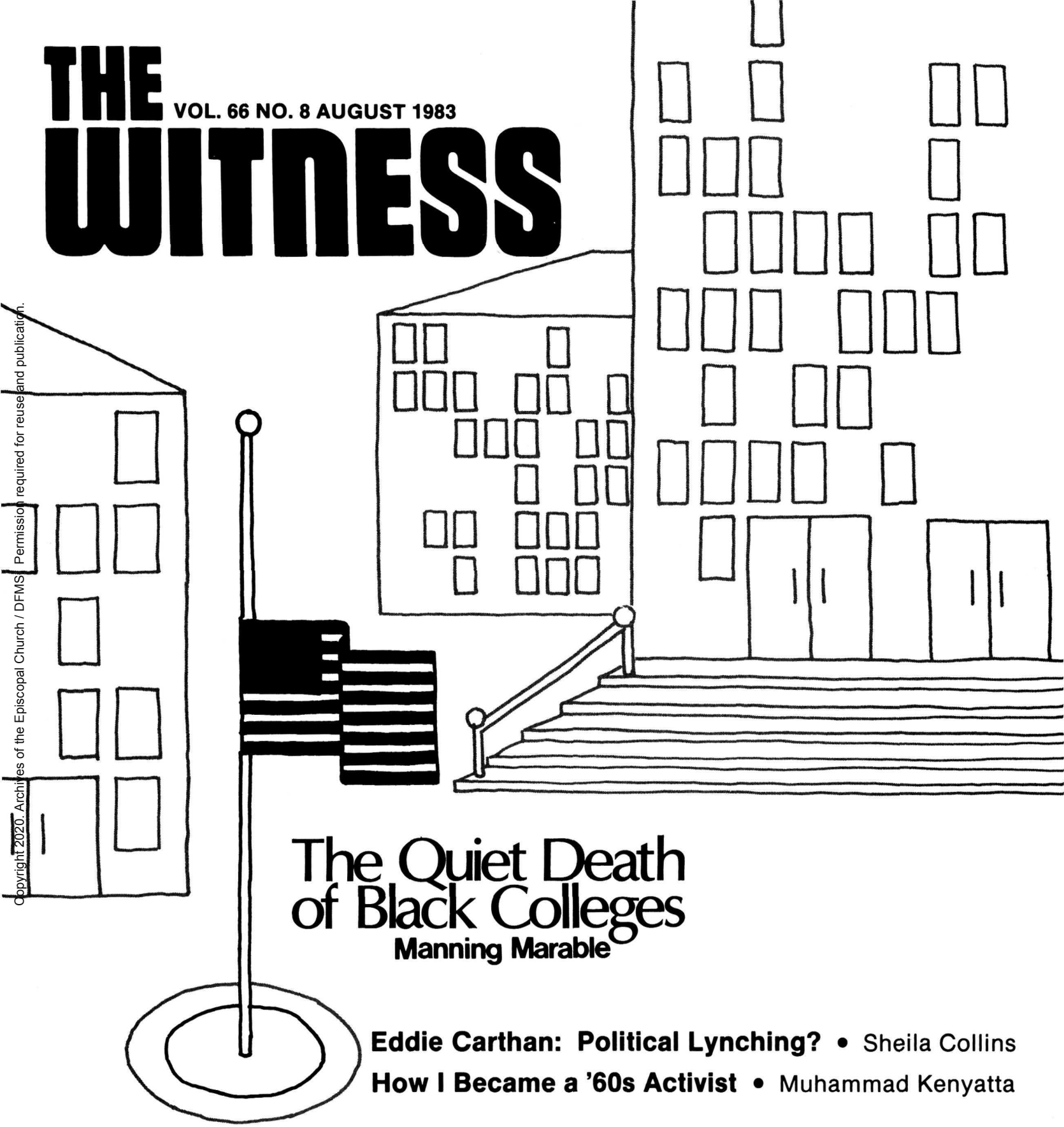

The Quiet Death of Black Colleges

Manning Marable

Eddie Carthan: Political Lynching? • Sheila Collins

How I Became a '60s Activist • Muhammad Kenyatta

LETTERS

Death Row Ministry

I was most impressed by Hugh White's editorial, "We Oppose the Death Penalty" in the June WITNESS.

I have long been against the death penalty both on moral and religious grounds and I see it in no way as being a deterrent.

Also, I don't believe that one human, or a group of humans, have the right to impose a sentence of death on another human. And even murderers are children of God.

I have a small prison ministry which I carry on through correspondence. Our correspondence covers a large area — sports, religion, art, philosophy, books, you name it. At the moment there are four "cell-mates"; two of whom are on death row — one over 13 years, and the other six years. Based on my own investigation, I am certain that neither of these young men are guilty, and that both were framed, and poorly represented by their court-appointed attorneys. My other two cell-mates are in for lesser offenses. All of these men — in their mid 30s — when treated with dignity and friendship, respond very well.

The ministry has provided some positive results. One of my death row friends was recently baptized. Another, a black Episcopalian, has become a confrater in affiliation with the monks of St. Gregory's Abbey, an Anglican Benedictine order in Three Rivers, Mich.

I am a retired Regular Army Officer and a retired attorney, the latter due to a complete laryngectomy in 1972. I find that this small prison ministry is one of the most satisfying activities I have ever experienced.

Again my thanks to you for an excellent and most timely article. The gates to execution are steadily being unbarred, much to the disgrace of this United States and its citizens.

Charles D. Corwin
Colonial Beach, Va.

Casting Stones

I felt bad when I saw the cartoon of the Moral Majority casting the first stone (June issue). I think that when we show others like this we are casting stones.

Jack Sawyer
Berkeley, Cal.

Hines Recalls Hymn

Bishop Hines' insightful and timely article on peace (May WITNESS), with its references to our Lord's admonitition to His followers of "Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you," recalls so vividly the message of Hymn 437 from the 1940 *Hymnal:*

"The peace of God, it is no peace,
But strife closed in the sod.
Yet, brothers (sisters), pray for but one thing —
The marvelous peace of God."

The Rev. Richard Buzby
Mathews, Va.

Unhappy Juxtaposition

I deeply appreciated Gail Habbyshaw's article, "Making Do" (May WITNESS). She described very clearly what it is like to be poor. However, I did not appreciate the unfortunate juxtaposition of a cartoon about inflation. Inflation is not "making do" in the terms Ms. Habbyshaw was describing.

Inflation won't kill people — unemployment often will. To invite any comparison of these two very different conditions is to risk falling into the trap of viewing them as somehow similar. This is what the current administration does — seeing unemployment as a necessary evil that we must bear to get rid of the demon inflation.

But inflation, even at 10% or 12%, is spread around across-the-board. Everyone, or almost everyone cuts back from steak to potroast, or potroast to meatloaf, or from meatloaf to occasional meatless meals. Unemployment (especially when it's more than 10%) is suffered by tens of thousands of individuals, who will be cutting back from something to nearly nothing. It's not a steak to meatloaf jump; rather, it's from reasonable security to desperate poverty.

I'm sure you didn't mean to imply that inflation and the poverty of unemployment had any similarity, but I think the placement of the article and cartoon invite that inference.

Virginia Klipstein
Philadelphia, Pa.

Priorities Jogged

The May issue of THE WITNESS included a poem by Ann R. Blakeslee called, "The Other Woman." To me it speaks of the conflict in those with conscience who are not poor. Ann R. Blakeslee tells it like it is. She jogs one's list of priorities with her open honesty. I wish I could meet her.

With your permission, I would like to reproduce it as it appears for the newsletter of St. Joan's International Alliance, Houston Chapter.

Elizabeth Minahan Judge
Houston, Tex.

Resource for Seminar

THE WITNESS is an inspiration and a valuable resource for me.

The Ontario Section of the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund is meeting in Ottawa for a seminar on refugees. I would like the delegates to read articles in the December issue of THE WITNESS about refugees and the whole of the March issue.

Could you let me have some back copies if they are available?

Jane Fyles, Coordinator
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada

Nominations Sought

The Joint Standing Committee on Nominations for the 1985 General Convention of the Episcopal Church is now seeking nominations for elective positions on

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THE WITNESS

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THE WITNESS

Editorial

Redeeming the Dream

Another milestone in U.S. history could be in the making with the recent formation of the New Coalition of Conscience, whose goal is to broaden and build upon the accomplishments of the Civil Rights Movement. The Reagan Administration is watching with some trepidation the possibility of a million people converging on Washington, D.C. in the Coalition's first public demonstration Aug. 27.

Under the rallying call of "Jobs, Peace, and Freedom," the New Coalition will bring together representatives from the women's movement, labor and peace movements, the churches, and minority concerns — not as a mere collection of single issue groups, but on the model of Martin Luther King's "beloved community," coalescing around a common dream.

The call to the nation issued by the New Coalition in this 20th anniversary year of that first memorable Civil Rights March on Washington states: *"We believe that a powerful unity of spirit — to seek the solution of our national problems through nonviolent and democratic procedures — will provide a catalyst for powerful and much needed social changes in this nation."*

Organizers are also mindful of the political and logistical lessons learned from other recent mass rallies (Labor's Solidarity Day in 1981, and the mammoth peace rally which drew a million people to New York in June, 1982).

In its call to the nation, the New Coalition outlines, specifically, what social changes it deems necessary for a more just society.

With respect to *jobs,* the Coalition calls:

— upon the American people to seek with all deliberate speed the full employment objectives of the Humphrey-Hawkins Act, which is now the law of the land.

— for a new social contract between labor, industry and government to assure all Americans socially useful and dignified employment with a just wage; to foster real economic growth and to provide adequate education and training for all Americans.

With regard to *peace,* the Coalition calls:

— upon both superpowers and their allies to radically reduce and ultimately eliminate their nuclear arsenals as well as conventional weapons; to act jointly to prevent the spread of such weapons to other nations and to reduce the record levels of military expenditures.

— upon the American people to follow the leadership of the growing number of religious leaders and other leaders of

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The Quiet Death of Black Colleges

by Manning Marable

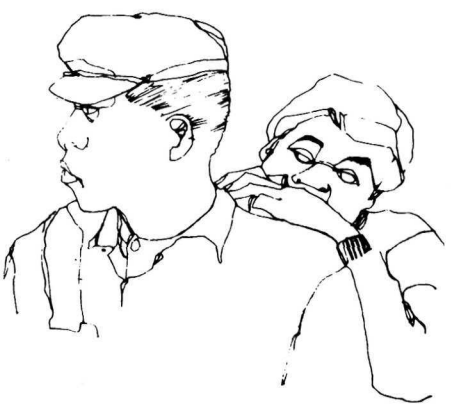
Most civil rights activists and progressives are aware of the growing national retreat from school desegregation programs. In the past six months alone, serious efforts to scrap desegregation have been mounted across the country, particularly in a number of Southern cities: Jacksonville, Fla.; Little Rock; Memphis; Nashville; Augusta, Ga.; and Norfolk, Va. In these cities, white moderates and conservatives have called for sizeable reductions in the number of schools which are scheduled for desegregation, and major increases in all-black public schools. And despite substantial social science research which proves that desegregation qualitatively improves black academic achievement scores, many black leaders — including local heads of NAACP chapters — have acquiesced to the retreat from busing and desegregation policies.

What has attracted little attention outside the South is another educational crisis which, if left unchecked, will have an even greater impact: the critical status of both black private and black state-supported colleges.

Ironically, desegregation plans effected by the courts to improve black higher education have often resulted in a deterioration of formerly all-black institutions. On Nov. 3, 1982, for example, civil rights attorneys filed a motion in federal court in Nashville charging that "desegregation of Tennessee higher education has failed." Tennessee State University (TSU), an all-black institution was merged with the overwhelmingly-white University of Tennessee-Nashville under court order in 1979. For three years, the new suit declared, TSU "has regressed previous black-white ratios." No progress has been made in improving the quality of TSU academic programs. In an interview, attorney Michael Passino stated that TSU students' performance on graduate and professional exams is "way below the national average."

As far as the state is concerned, "TSU ends up getting the short end of the stick," in part, "because it was established as a black university by statute," according to Passino. Basically, the state government has adhered to the letter of the law, but in practice nothing has changed to improve the quality of black education.

Tennessee State's problems are



Dr. Manning Marable is Director of the Race Relations Institute, Fisk University, Nashville. Dr. Marable is the author of many books and articles on the black experience, most recently, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*. His syndicated political column appears in over 140 newspapers in the United States and in the United Kingdom.

mirrored at more than 60 black public institutions. In the 1960s and early '70s, a number of historically black colleges were forced by Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act to merge with neighboring all-white schools. All-black Maryland State College became the University of Maryland-Eastern Shore; the University of Arkansas incorporated all-black Arkansas A and M. As a result, many black educators and alumni of these institutions claimed, with some justification, that desegregation had destroyed their ethnic identity and had actually reduced the educational opportunities available to many blacks. By the early 1980s, Lincoln University at Missouri, West Virginia State and the University of Maryland-Eastern Shore all had majority white student bodies. Delaware State and Maryland's Bowie State had over one-third white students, and Kentucky State's student population was 49% white.

The problems at the 40 or so black privately-supported colleges are even more severe. Founded largely by white liberal philanthropists and churches in the decades after the Civil War, institutions like Spelman and Morehouse Colleges of Atlanta and Tougaloo College, Mississippi, were for three generations the foundations of black learning. Despite the institutional barriers of quality education created by Jim Crow, these small colleges did a remarkable job in preparing black youth for productive careers in the humanities, the natural and social sciences.

A brief review of one such, Fisk University, provides an illustration. Fisk was the home for a major number of black intellectuals during the era of segregation: educator W. E. B. DuBois, historian John Hope Franklin; sociologist E. Franklin Frazier; artists/novelists James Weldon Johnson, Arna Bontemps, Sterling Brown, Nikki Giovanni, John Oliver Killens, and Frank Yerby. A number of Fisk alumni joined the ranks of the black elite in the 20th century as decisive leaders in public policy, representing a variety of political tendencies: U.S. Rep. William L. Dawson; Mayor Marion Barry, Washington, D.C.; Wade H. McCree, U.S. Solicitor General during the Carter Administration; U.S. District Judge Constance Baker Motley; civil rights activist John Lewis; Texas State Rep. Wilhelmina Delco; Federal Judge James Kimbrough. Other Fisk graduates moved into the private sector to establish an economic program for black development along capitalist lines, such as A. Maceo Walker, president of Universal Life Insurance Company.

"The dilemma for black progressives regarding the future of black colleges is the historic failure of these institutions to articulate a clear pedagogy and practice of liberation . . . The vast majority of black administrators are clones of the corporate world, and have little if any sympathy with Black Studies and the radical pedagogical departures which gave birth to a new generation of black scholarship in the 1960s and early '70s."

One out of every six black physicians, lawyers and dentists in the United States today are Fisk graduates. A similar profile could be obtained from Atlanta University, Morehouse, Spelman, Tougaloo, Tuskegee Institue of Alabama, Howard University of Washington, D.C., and other black institutions of higher learning.

After desegregation, the best black students were suddenly recruited away from black institutions. Black faculty were lured away with promises of higher salaries, smaller teaching loads, and better working conditions. Black middle class alumni of Fisk and Atlanta University began to send their own children to Yale, Oberlin and Stanford. As operating costs increased in the 1970s, Fisk was forced, as were other black private schools, to dip repeatedly into endowment funds to cover day-to-day operating expenses. In less than a decade, Fisk's endowment dropped from $14 million to only $3.5 million, and its student enrollment declined from a high of 1700 in 1973-74 to less than 750 this academic year.

With the advent of the Reagan Administration, the political forces of reaction which once defended black colleges as being necessary "to preserve Jim Crow" have now determined for financial reasons that these black institutions must be closed. On July 28, 1982, Secretary of Education T. H. Bell ordered the end of all further student loans to institutions where defaults in repaying National Direct Student Loans totaled 25% or more. The cutoff affected 528 institutions, most of which were community colleges, technical schools and business schools. Predictably, the largest institutions affected tend to have students with working class backgrounds, or who are from minority communities. And, predictably, at the top of the list were most of the major traditionally black colleges.

The campus-based National Direct Student Loan program was created in 1958, and since then has given $7.5 billion in loans to 6.5 million students. Most of the black recipients were first-generation students, and could not have attended college without federal support. From the vantage point of black campuses Bell's decision seemed un-

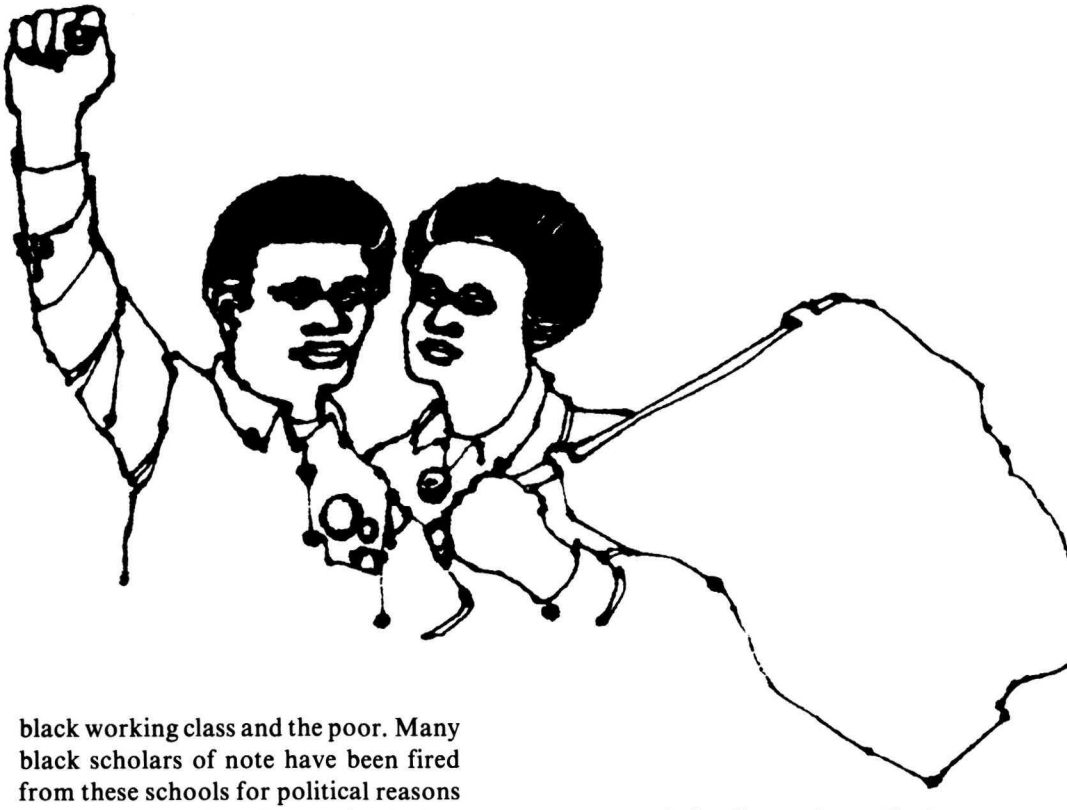
usually cruel. It penalized current and prospective black undergraduates by closing off an important loan source, during a time when black unemployment is at postwar highs. It penalized students who had not yet attended college, for the sake of punishing those who had already graduated.

Fisk administrators anticipated the Reagan Administration's moves, and attempted to offset federal cutbacks by extensive fundraising efforts. In February, 1982, the board of trustees announced that it would seek $2 million by the end of June. By the beginning of last fall, the board had only raised $200,000. Facing an immediate fiscal crisis, President Walter Leonard candidly informed the Fisk faculty in October of the severity of the problem. "I have tried very often to shield faculty and staff from serious financial problems because I have always felt up to now that I've been able to pull a rabbit out of the hat. I'm not sure how long I will be able to do that."

Leonard stated when he came to Fisk in 1977 that we "would not miss a payroll." But now "given the way our economy is, the way people resent strong black institutions, I can no longer make that promise." When the Nashville press later published his remarks, Leonard added for the record that the "only way we can relieve ourselves of the problem is to solidify our efforts to raise money" and make even greater sacrifices. "I don't think we are suddenly going to sink without a trace."

Part 2

The dilemma for black progressives regarding the increasingly problemmatical future of black colleges is the historic failure of these institutions to articulate a clear pedagogy and practice of liberation. Few colleges have ever been linked organically to the ongoing economic and political struggles of the black working class and the poor. Many black scholars of note have been fired from these schools for political reasons — and this tradition of authoritarianism is at least three generations old. In 1927, Howard University dismissed the nation's most prominent literary critic, Alain Locke, and three other professors on questionable grounds. W.E.B. DuBois, the NAACP leader, attacked Locke's firing as tantamount to the surrender of "the privilege of free speech and independent thinking" at Howard. In 1944, DuBois himself was fired from the sociology faculty at Atlanta University, prompting a national campaign against the school's president, Rufus Clement.



In 1949 and 1955, Fisk University's board of trustees fired professors who refused to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Two years ago Howard University administrators denied tenure to James Garrett, a Marxist political activist, which prompted massive campus demonstrations. As a rule, black colleges are overtly hostile toward unionization among staff members, and use every means at their disposal to displace radical and Pan-Africanist faculty.

Part of the reason that black colleges as a rule maintain their legacy of authoritarian governance is found in their respective boards of trustees. Trade and technical-oriented universities tend to be controlled by powerful white corporate executives and conservative politicians. The more liberal and humanities-oriented black private colleges tend to have a greater number of black scholars and liberal whites, but are still dominated by corporate capital.

There is something of a "neocolonial dynamic" in the selection of the college presidents of many black colleges. In theory, the senior faculty, top administrators and alumni play a role in selecting presidents; in practice, black college presidents tend to be chosen by conservative black and corporate white-dominated boards of trustees with little outside input. As in post-independent Africa, black private colleges gradually received the "right" to be run by black

administrators — for example, Howard University in 1926 with the appointment of Mordecai Johnson, and Fisk in 1947 with Charles S. Johnson's appointment.

With rare exceptions, however, most black presidents were not distinguished by their scholarship; most were personally and politically conservative, and they perpetuated the climate of academic authoritarianism and a hostility toward the left which their benefactors on their boards required. A few "Black Power-era" scholars have won presidential posts at black institutions, such as sociologist Andrew Billingsley at Morgan State University in Baltimore and black liberation theologist Cecil Cone at Jacksonville's Edward Waters College. However, the vast majority of black administrators are clones of the corporate world, and have little if any sympathy with Black Studies and the radical pedagogical departures which gave birth to a new generation of black scholarship in the 1960s and early '70s.

Unlike many traditional white liberal arts colleges, where decisions tend to be made by tenured senior faculty, department chairs and administrators, virtually all power is ensconced in the hands of the president at a black university. At some schools, black faculty are required to submit their course syllabi for administrative scrutiny prior to the ordering of textbooks. Faculty have been disciplined for using "subversive texts," such as Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man.* Some black private colleges still require 11 p.m. curfews for "girls," and aggressively discourage student unions from inviting progressive speakers on campus. One college president officially "banned" the local president of the NAACP from speaking on campus last year on the grounds that he was too radical.

Black faculty are very reticient to speak on the record about the authoritarianism and lack of democracy which is found at most black colleges. One faculty member at a small black college in Mississippi described his environment as "nothing short of a concentration camp." Another professor declares:

> *The president encourages bootlicking and bad faith. It sabotages everything he does. There is an attitude of mistrust and fear. The president sets the tone and he's responsible for accelerating the brain drain from this school. The suspicion, paternalism here is like going through hell. The students are taught two things: "sit down and shut up" and "cover your ass." Whenever things go wrong, the president either blames the board trustees or the faculty. We can't build a community when people are made to feel small.*

Faculty workloads of four to five courses per semester (compared to two courses at many white private schools) serve as a check on faculty scholarship and productive research. "The average faculty member is not motivated to work," one faculty member stated. "That any scholarship at all comes out of here means that people are hyper-dedicated."

The number of horror stories which were told to me are too numerous to mention. At one black college, the president expelled the entire student government leadership for raising issues related to democratic rights on campus. One college president verbally abused a group of students in a public forum, and then threatened to take one especially provocative pupil behind the chapel to administer corporal punishment. At Morgan State, students publicly demonstrated against Billingsley for three years, unsuccessfully demanding his resignation.

Despite these conditions, every black faculty member interviewed expressed the view that black colleges had to be defended and ultimately improved. "My commitment is stronger than money," one professor stated. "Teaching at a black college is a personal commitment to the black community. Without a strong black community, true racial desegregation is not possible. That's why we're needed here." One student protest leader described her education at her college as "the best years of my life." There is a desire to challenge the gross failures of these institutions, but not at the risk of their continued survival. Few students at black colleges are willing or eager to transfer into majority-white institutions.

The challenge of saving black higher education is a two-fold process. Politically, the right to preserve all-black educational institutions means that pressure must be exerted on the federal government to increase its support. White progressives especially must comprehend that the battle to maintain a Fisk University or an Atlanta University as all-black centers for scholarship in no way contradicts the demand for a desegregated, pluralistic society. For the foreseeable future, white universities will employ every means, legal and otherwise, to reduce the number of black faculty, staff and students at their institutions. Thus the effort to maintain black colleges is in essence the attempt to guarantee black access to higher education.

Second, the pursuit of genuine democracy and a black pedagogy for liberation must be fought for *within* these universities, and efforts waged by black students in this regard must also be supported. As Dr. DuBois observed at the 71st anniversary commencement exercises of Knoxville College on June 16, 1946: "Are (black) institutions worth saving? I am convinced that there is a place and a continuing function for the small Negro college. (They) have an unusual opportunity to fill a great need and to do a work which no other agency could do so well." ■

Eddie Carthan: Case Study Of a Political Lynching

by Sheila D. Collins

Just 20 years after the famous "March on Washington," which called the nation's attention to its forgotten and oppressed racial minorities, a drama is unfolding in a corner of Mississippi which is symbolic of the deep and unyielding power of racism in American political and economic life.

It involves the case of Eddie James Carthan, the young black mayor of Tchula — a small town in Mississippi's cotton-growing region — whose tragic plight has begun to catch national and international attention. According to such organizations as the National Council of Churches, the National Conference of Black Mayors, the World Student Christian Federation and the Center for Constitutional Rights, Eddie Carthan may be the object of a political lynching, which has sent him to prison for at least three years and almost cost him his life.

Eddie Carthan's story begins in the 1960s when, as the son of a poor black farmer, Eddie attended civil-rights meetings with his grandfather. It was a time when blacks were organizing for the right to vote throughout the South, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was running "Freedom Schools" to teach black youth that they had a right to dignity, freedom and self-determination. Eddie Carthan was arrested and jailed at the age of 14 for participating in a civil rights demonstration.

Internalizing the lessons taught in the Freedom Schools, Eddie Carthan was determined to pursue an education so he could serve his people. After receiving a Masters Degree in Educational Administration and Supervision from Jackson State University, he attended one year of law school and worked for the U.S. Commerce Department, before starting his own business. His object was to seek political office, but he knew that in order to do so, he would first have to establish an independent financial base, for in his part of the South, blacks could be kept politically impotent through white control of the economy. By his mid-20s, Eddie Carthan had become a successful businessman (by small-town standards), the second largest employer in Tchula, and president of the Holmes County School Board. At the age of 27, in 1977, he was elected mayor of Tchula. Passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which struck down many of the discriminatory voting regulations of the Southern states, made possible Carthan's election as the first black mayor in 100 years of a biracial town in the Mississippi Delta.

The Delta region of Mississippi is a flat, alluvial plain in the northwestern part of the state spanning several counties. There, cotton and soybeans are grown on large plantations by descendents of the old slave-owning class. Though it is an agriculturally rich region, the several black-majority towns and counties are among the poorest in the nation. Tchula (population 3,000) demonstrates the corrosive effects of the plantation-slave economy and continuing racism on such areas:

- 30% of the town's 80% black population are unemployed. The chief form of employment for the region's blacks is tractor-driving on the white-owned plantations, or yard work and domestic service in white people's homes.
- 66% of the population is on welfare.
- 81% of the housing units are classified as deteriorating, and 47% of all family dwellings lack some or all plumbing facilities.

In contrast to the unpaved streets and dilapidated housing in the black sections of town, white-owned houses sit neatly on manicured lawns, surrounded by tall trees. In Holmes County, in which Tchula is located, virtually all of the white children go to privately financed academies, leaving the public schools all black.

For over a century, Tchula, like most other black-majority towns throughout the South, had been run by the white planters and businessmen. By controlling the labor market, the credit system, and the police and judiciary, they had been able to keep the black majority quiescent and dependent. Like its schools and businesses, the churches of Holmes County have been totally segregated. The mores of racial separation are blessed by most clergy who, themselves, are dependent on the white planters and businessmen for their livelihood.

The only time that white rule was seriously threatened in states such as

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Sheila Collins, noted feminist author and theologian, is a former staff member of the United Methodist Voluntary Service who was forced out of her post in a Right-wing offensive within her denomination, UMVS had supported the Carthan case as a national network-wide priority before it was "redesigned" recently.

Mississippi, was during the first "Reconstruction" period after the Civil War. Although this period has been much maligned by Southern historians, there were attempts to establish political democracy, which resulted in some of the first public schools, attention to public health, and more humane treatment of prisoners and the mentally ill.

With the collusion of the federal government, the first Reconstruction was violently overthrown, just 10 years after it had begun, in 1877. For almost 100 years after that, an apartheid political and social system, backed up by Klan terror, had governed the South.

Many see the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s as the "Second Reconstruction," which attempted, once again, to assert the principles of political democracy, justice and equal rights under law. It was on the tailend of this second Reconstruction, that Eddie James Carthan was elected mayor of Tchula.

Mayor Carthan was elected as an "independent," on a platform to serve *all* the people. "I thought I could represent those who had come through slavery, knowing nothing about voting, about going to a motel, sitting in the front of the bus, or eating in a restaurant," he recalled recently. In the late 1970s, with a president (Jimmy Carter) in the White House who still owed a political debt to blacks, an enterprising local black politician could use the federal grants system to bypass the local white power structure in bringing money and programs to the area. Carthan aggressively pursued such funds in order to turn the town's grim statistics around. His accomplishments included a home weatherization and rehabilitation program, a day care center for children, a nutritional feeding program for the elderly, paved streets and street signs, 100 units of new housing, and 80 new jobs. Altogether 34 development programs were begun under the Carthan administration. But sadly, many of them were never to get off the ground.

Former Mayor Eddie Carthan and his wife Shirley leave the court building following his acquittal on murder in October, 1982. Carthan was immediately taken by federal authorities to serve a 3-year sentence for fraud. His supporters believe collusion exists between federal and state authorities to keep Carthan behind bars.

As President Carter's popularity began to wane, so did support for black political independence. After Carthan turned down a bribe from the white business community to "do things the way they have always been done," a campaign of political harassment was initiated by the white planters and their political allies aimed at driving the aggressive young mayor from office and discrediting him forever in the eyes of his constituency.

County and state officials, in collusion with three Tchula aldermen (two blacks dependent on the white power structure and one white), employed rumor, negative press, court suits challenging the mayor's legal prerogatives, physical threats, and economic sanctions to prevent Carthan from carrying out his duties. When these tactics failed to deter the mayor, they resorted to a series of political frame-ups reminiscent of those used against black elected officials after the first Reconstruction 100 years earlier.

Three major trials and two convictions have sent Eddie James Carthan to prison for the next several years of his life. On April 12, 1981 — three months before he was to run for a second term — Mayor Carthan, an alderman and six auxiliary policemen were convicted of "simple assault of a police officer." The case has come to be known as the "Tchula 7." (One had died in the interim.) The charge stemmed from an incident in which the seven men nonviolently disarmed Jim Andrews, a white man who had been illegally "appointed" police chief by the op-

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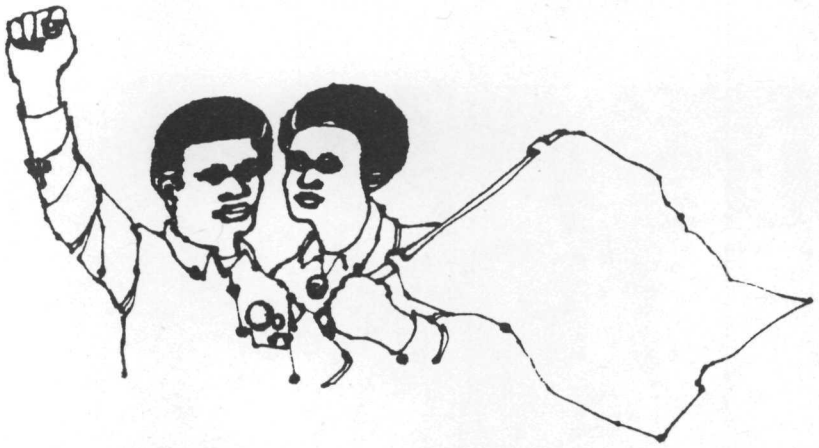

How I Became a '60s Activist

I remember clearly my conversion experience during a down-home Baptist revival in a backwoods black community a score of miles outside Lynchburg, Va., in my seven-year-old summer of 1951. It was three years before the 1954 Supreme Court decision against school desegregation, in *Brown v. Topeka, Kansas,* which sparked the birth of the Civil Rights Movement.

The same year that the movement learned to walk in the Montgomery, Ala. bus boycott led by Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr., I heard the call to go preach the Gospel. To a 12-year-old child living, playing, going to school, and going to church in the "West End" ghetto of segregated Chester, Pa. in 1956, the spectacle of Alabama Negroes massively resisting white oppression was certainly more miraculous than having conversations with God.

I had often seen Martin Luther King, Jr., for he had belonged to our own Calvary Baptist Church while he was a student at Crozer Theological Seminary, that used to be where the Chester public hospital is now. But Dr. King seemed, by 1956, more distant and extraordinary than my close companion Jesus.

After two years of struggling against the call to the ministry, I succumbed in 1958. Under the tutelage and spiritual guidance of Calvary's gruff, scholarly pastor, Dr. J. Pius Barbour, I delivered my "trial sermon" and was licensed to preach on March 22, shortly after my 14th birthday. Neither my immediate, extended family nor our close friends — including my godmother Mrs. Addie Cheeks who taught civics at Frederick Douglas Junior High School — were very surprised that I became a preacher at an early age. My stately grandmother, Mrs. Carrie Lee Jackson, had been a pillar in Calvary since she and her farmer-turned-steelworker husband, Bonzie, had moved up from Virginia in the early '40s, drawn by Chester's wartime industrial boom. And, like my mother Ernestine before me, I was celebrated in our circles as a child prodigy, precocious for my oratorical flair, my interest in religion, and my vocal advocacy of racial equality.

Thanks to my mother, who taught her children to read before we started school and who finagled me into the first grade a year younger than the law allowed, and thanks to Mrs. Cheeks, who engineered a double promotion for me at Douglas Junior High, my early formal education was not always a disaster. So, too, my family and my godmother encouraged my early social awareness, nurtured my nascent commitment to the freedom movement, and gave me the space to explore radical ideas.

Along with Dr. King and Joe Louis the Brown Bomber, Albert Einstein was a hero of my childhood and early teens. Although ardent creationists, my mother and grandmother gave free rein to my fascination with scientific theories of evolution and with Einstein's theory of relativity. When our ninth grade civics class chose up sides for mock presidential election debates and I blithely selected the Socialist Labor candidate, Mrs. Cheeks not only gave me equal time, but also encouraged my political independence.

In addition to family, the black church, and the ironic blessings of Jim Crow elementary education, my preparation for social activism included vicariously, the experiences of my grandfather, Bonzie, and my father, Joseph Bagley, in the hellhot pit and around the blast furnaces of the Quaker-owned Worth Steel Mill (later Phoenix Steel), seven miles south of Chester in Claymont, Del. Although

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by Muhammad Kenyatta

neither of them were formally educated beyond grade school, Daddy and Grandaddy were highly conscious, rank-and-file union men who read religiously their United Steel Workers newspapers and pored over their complex union contracts as devoutly as Dr. Barbour studied ancient Greek and contemporary theology.

Like "Doc" Barbour, my father and grandfather shared with me anecdotes, legends, and narratives of mortal struggles against hellfire and against the demons that tried to claim their souls. I could see the marks of their beasts in the scorched, tattered workclothes and on the scorched, black flesh that the men in our family wore home from the mill. And, though Bonzie Jackson was retired 16 years ago by reaching the age of 65 and though Joe Bagley was retired in his early 50s by losing part of his left foot in a commonplace industrial accident, I see them still trying to exorcise grim spirits of white bossmen and sell-out labor leaders — trying to drown those spirits in the commonplace alcoholism that does for them what religion often does for others.

My own ambivalence about organized religion was obscured by early successes in that arena. The camaraderie of my peers in a teenage gospel singing group (the Harmonizing Echoes organized by my oldest brother Freddie) and my busy schedule as a "Boy Wonder" evangelist were antidotes to the alienation I felt in high school, for high school was my introduction to the strange "white land." At Chester High and later at Edison High in North Philadelphia's black and Puerto Rican ghetto, lily-white faculties and administrations generally treated black students like intrusions from another world. I guess we were.

Of course, there were selective white teachers who took under wing exceptional black students, teachers who clucked, "You're not like the rest of them." And, thank God, there were even teachers whose caring knew no boundaries of selective racism, for whom all students were their children. A disproportionately large number of that last group were Jewish teachers who affirmed and identified with the new Negro freedom struggle. They, too, shaped my comprehension of white America as I learned paradoxically to believe in black-and-white solidarity even while being confirmed in a deep hatred for the white American social disorder.

As the decade of the '60s formally began, I turned 16, was ordained the assistant pastor at my uncle Reverend Rob Jackson's storefront Solid Rock Baptist Church in North Philadelphia, and — come September — went off to Lincoln University, an historically black, Pennsylvania college. There the nonviolent protest movement claimed the attention of an activist minority within the 311 member student body. Moreover, Lincoln's student body included a large contingent of Africans, most of them older students who had scraped long and hard to meet matriculation fees at Kwame Nkrumah's *alma mater*. From these students, some almost twice my age, I caught a lifelong infection of Pan-Africanism. From them, too, I learned to value education in direct proportion to its enhancement of self-determination and social justice.

Also at Lincoln was Dr. Lawrence Foster, the first black American Ph.D. in Sociology. An implacable nemesis of mediocrity, Lawrence Foster linked urban sociology to international political economy, and demanded that I inform activist passions with scientific social analysis. His best legacy (that I often misplace) was the cauterant admonition, "Boy, you have got to stop letting people use your head as a garbage can."

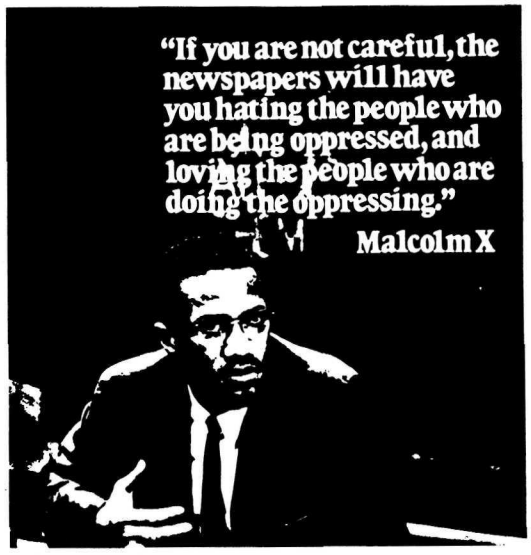
I never returned as a student to Lincoln after that freshman year. Lacking money to continue college, I enlisted in the Air Force when I was 17. I was in uniform when James Meredith became the first black to enroll at "Ole Miss" in the midst of white rioting, surrounded by a detachment of the National Guard. The racial conflict spilled over into the military and, with my bosom buddy from the housing projects of St. Louis — a fellow 17-year-old named Reynard Bufkin, I organized protests against racial discrimination and Jim Crow in the Strategic Air Command's Altus, Okla., base. By then, I had moved away from the religious pacifism of Martin Luther King, Jr. which I had championed at Lincoln.

Violent conflicts erupted between black enlisted men and white enlistees who were supported by white officers.

Twice I was threatened with court martial for treason: once for speaking out in support of Meredith, and once for urging blacks in the Air Base motor pool to resist

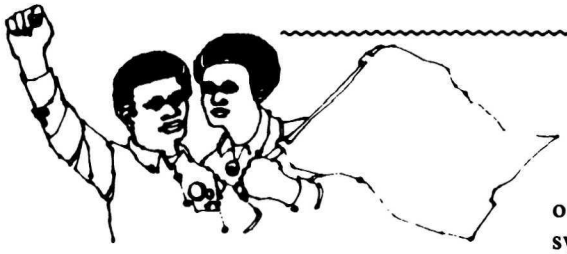
cooperation with a S.A.C. alert. The alert had been called to prepare for an attack on Cuba, where Fidel Castro was consolidating the leftist, but still non-Communist Cuban revolution. As motor pool drivers, our job was to ferry pilots and other personnel across the airfield to their gigantic B-51 bombers. Castro was then popular with many politicized blacks in the north, especially those who had been influenced by the radical internationalism of the Black Muslim Minister Malcolm X. Castro, I argued, was waging the same battle as the sitters-in and civil rights demonstrators. Fortunately for me and for the people of both countries, the S.A.C. alert was rescinded. The attack on Cuba was postponed until the Bay of Pigs fiasco.

But I was arrested, in 1962, by local authorities in the cotton-belt town of Altus, when Ray Bufkin and I attempted a sit-in at a dingy little restaurant on the white side of the tracks. After a night in the local jail, which had three separate cells for white and colored and migrant Chicano cotton pickers, Bufkin and I were remanded to Air Force authorities. Back on base, we were confined to quarters and put on 16-hour daily workshifts for 14 days straight; the charge was "failure to obey local customs." My parents alerted George Raymond, the longtime leader of the Chester NAACP, who solicited the intervention of Philadelphia Congressman Robert N. C. Nix, one of the handful of blacks in the U.S. House of Representatives. Nix intervened, using my extensive documentation of events at Altus to initiate an



investigation of racial discrimination in the Strategic Air Command. That investigation yielded three results: President John F. Kennedy issued an executive order against military discrimination; Bufkin was shipped out to Puerto Rico; and I was severed from the Air Force with an honorable discharge. On Nov. 20, 1962, I became officially an 18-year-old veteran.

One small episode, however, tempered my celebration of our victory over the Air Force. When released from "house arrest" on base, I hurried to the colored side of town (that was literally divided by railroad tracks). There my civilian



Kenyatta Postscript Recalls FBI 'Dirt

In 1966, concern about the condition of black people in the South, and the moral imperatives of being a Baptist minister, took me to Mississippi with my wife and child. Things happened there that I only understood much later, after getting my files from the FBI, CIA and IRS.

I was working for the Youth Corps and attending Tougaloo College. Someone told parents of black kids draining swamps for the Youth Corps that I was a drug peddler. My wife and I would wake up in the morning to see an unmarked car with two men and a microphone parked across the street; the car would follow my wife to market, and me to Tougaloo.

The day after Martin Luther King's assassination I was arrested — supposedly because of my license tag — held over the weekend, and fined $100 plus costs of $27 — $27 being all the money on me when I was arrested. Then one day I was sitting in a car when a shot smashed the front windows on the driver's side and passenger's side.

My wife and I had thought about buying a house and plot of land and putting down roots in Mississippi. But one day in 1969 a letter came signed by the Tougaloo College Defense Committee: "Since you have not taken our warnings, we will have to take stronger measures." It happened that my wife and child were in Philadelphia. I'd like to be able to say I bravely stood my ground; but in fact, I got in our VW and drove to the airport, abandoning all our belongings in the house, and the VW in

girlfriend, Kassie Mae Morgan, lived in ramshackle squalor with her sharecropper family. Indignant and triumphant, I recounted my battles to Kassie Mae whom I expected to greet me as a conquering hero. After my recitation, Kassie looked at me blankly and simply asked why we had sat in at the restaurant to begin with. "You know that you don't belong," Kassie said in deadeyed earnest, "where white people say you can't go."

The bus ride from Altus to Chester takes two days and three packs of cigarettes. You put your Air Force duffel bag in the luggage compartment and your overnight case on the rack above your seat. You arrange and rearrange your thoughts, not sure where to put Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. At each stop you pick up a newspaper, scanning for reports about the sit-ins and marches. You wonder how you'll pick up your schooling and if you'll be lucky enough to pick up a job, once you're back in Pennsylvania. Remembering how you broke your hand in a barracks fistfight months ago, you wonder if it will hurt to pick up a Bible again. You remember Bufkin and wonder if he had somebody to talk to, to laugh with, to cry with, in Puerto Rico.

All you know is that you are going home to enlist in the Freedom Movement. That you're going to join the war against the Thing that murdered Kassie's eyes. And you know the living Jesus is at your side, going along for more than just this ride. ■

Wrassle Me Up a Future

"I'm going to wrassle me up a future, or die trying."
— Zora Neale Hurston

Well, she died alone, among the
damp green shadows of a Florida State
Nursing Home, this woman who dared
love herself
laughing, and then again
looking mean and nasty. Once
a widely published black
woman writer, she died alone
unfeted and utterly
without funds, still spinning and flinging
the lines that tickled Harlem
with the tongue of that warm and proud
black town from which she sailed
in her own, mind you, houseboat
to the sharp white spires
of New York City. She died alone,
looking wild and warm and mean and full
of the power of voodoo spirits and the lush
jungle magic, singing Honduras
and Haiti and even her own bitter bite,
America, this woman of tough
tender going down deep in earth
guts, who not even then, at the un-
dignified, premature and unnecessary end,
gave up her life's work, still shooting off
splinters of her unsolicited genius.
She died alone, still trying
to "wrassle me up a future."
Sisters of courage and chaos
sayers of unwanted truths, lovers
of life's muddy earth, we're
it.

— Linda Backiel

'Tricks' of 1969; Suit Pending

the airport parking lot. I wrote some friends later to get the VW from the lot if they wanted it.

It all began to make sense when the Media, Pa., FBI files were "liberated" in 1972. There were 367 entries on me for 365 days, from people in my own organization. The ACLU and attorney Dave Kairys got court orders for more FBI files, which gave clues about CIA and IRS, and showed collusion with Philadelphia's Civil Disobedience Squad. It turned out that it was the FBI which had alleged that I was peddling drugs to kids in the South, tailed us, and set up my arrest after Dr. King's assassination; I was on their "agitator index."

An FBI informant was present when three guns were passed out to people on the Tougaloo College Defense Committee. When shooting up my car didn't send me running, the FBI forged the letter, ostensibly from the Defense Committee, had it OK'd by J. Edgar Hoover, and mailed it.

Let's not fool ourselves that because such things are wrong they won't work. Bad guys *do* win, and they'll win more if people don't fight back. The focus changes, mechanisms change; but the police still repress American political expression.

(Muhammad Kenyatta filed suit in 1977 against the FBI and its agents in Mississippi for violation of civil rights and monetary damages. The ACLU is handling the case, which is still pending. — Eds.)

Carthan . . . *Continued from page 9*

posing aldermen and who was taking over city hall at gunpoint from the black chief of police.

Though Carthan filed charges against Andrews, only the assault charges against Carthan and his men were bound over to the grand jury by the judge, who happened to be Andrews' sister-in-law. It was actually the testimony of James Harris, a black off-duty officer whom Andrews had ordered to come down to city hall, that was used to convict the Tchula 7. Carthan's defense claimed that Harris was hiding out in a back room during the scuffle and that when he was discovered, Carthan's men ordered him to go home. Black-on-black crime and political rivalry has been the recurring charge by whites throughout this series of events. In a black-majority area, where real power remains in white hands, it has become a convenient way of hiding the institutional levers of racism.

After several other racially biased court and political maneuvers, which included Judge Webb Franklin's refusal to instruct the jury that Carthan was acting lawfully as mayor when he attempted to disarm and arrest Andrews, Carthan and the six town officials were convicted, and the mayor was sentenced to three years in the state penitentiary. In the Tchula town election which followed Carthan's ouster from office, the town's administration became white once more.

In what supporters believe was a second frame-up, Eddie Carthan was convicted in October 1981 of "giving false information to a federally insured bank." The testimony convicting him came from two admitted swindlers, who claimed that Eddie had given them permission to sign his name in a fake delivery receipt which they used as collateral to obtain a loan from a bank. In spite of conflicting and continually changing testimony by the two men, Carthan was sentenced to an additional three years in a federal prison. In exchange for their testimony, the forgers were given lighter sentences than the mayor.

In April 1982, Eddie James Carthan, by then driven from office, labeled by the courts and press as a "habitual criminal," his business in ruins, was charged with "capital murder, armed robbery and conspiracy to rob a Tchula bank." The charges stemmed from the robbery-murder of Roosevelt Granderson in June 1981, one of the black aldermen who had sided with the white power structure in opposing Carthan's administration. In October 1982, after one of the longest, most costly, and certainly most dramatic trials in Mississippi's history, Carthan was acquitted by an all-black jury. Because of the excellent work done by the legal defense team and local supporters in preparing for the jury selection process, the defense was able to get the second all-black jury in the history of that area. In the process, they discovered that the jury rolls had been rigged by white officials for years, in order to insure that every jury that tries a black person has influential whites on it who can determine the jury's verdict.

The state's key witnesses, two self-confessed murderers, one of whom admitted in court that he had sold the murder victim $30,000 worth of pure cocaine, were given greatly reduced sentences in exchange for their testimony that Carthan had hired them to kill his "political rival." But the state of Mississippi had no case. The testimony of the two admitted killers was so preposterous that, according to Carthan's legal team, they wouldn't have been able to get an indictment in any other state in the nation.

The state of Mississippi was apparently willing to go to extraordinary lengths — including suborning perjury — to transform what was obviously a killing over drugs into a case of alleged political revenge. Since the acquittal, nothing has been done by the state to investigate the real motive for the murder, in spite of repeated requests to Governor William Winter to look into the drug connection. On the contrary, the murderers were let off with extremely lenient sentences in exchange for their testimony.

The state of Mississippi subsequently denied bail to Carthan and sent him, in shackles and chains, to serve his three year sentence on the simple assault charge at Parchman State Prison, notoriously known as "Hell." In spite of the fact that two black jurors who served on the assault case wrote to the governor to say that they had been "tricked and misled" by the white judge and jury foreman into a guilty verdict, the governor has refused to review the charges.

Recently, Governor Winter has been heralded in the national press as a great "liberal," for pushing through a public education bill 50 years after every other state in the nation had passed such laws. There is talk of his running as a vice presidential candidate for the Democrats in the next national election. Anxious to wash his hands of the politically sensitive Carthan affair, the governor finally suspended Carthan's three-year sentence for assault seven months after he had begun serving it. The suspension was the result of tremendous political pressure from around the country.

Immediately after he was suspended on the state charge, Carthan was taken by federal authorities to begin serving his next three-year sentence for fraud. Carthan's supporters believe there is collusion between federal and state authorities to keep Carthan behind bars as long as possible. Former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark is handling

the appeal of his cases to the U.S. Supreme Court.

To the whites of Mississippi, who control the political, economic, judicial and police systems, Eddie James Carthan is a young man who tried to go too far too fast and got caught in his own corruption and ineptitude. But to his supporters around the country — who include poor black Mississippians, veteran civil rights organizers, black and white activists in church-related social justice networks, left political parties and organizations, some prominent black entertainers, politicans and intellectuals, Eddie Carthan is a prophet, crying in the wilderness. In the view of a group of New York area clergy who visited him in prison in February, Eddie Carthan "was made a political prisoner through the structures of injustice at the local, state, and federal levels of government." Amnesty International sent an observer to his murder trial in October and is considering his case as a possible "prisoner of conscience."

"Carthan is not an isolated case," said Mississippi state senator Henry Kirksey, the "dean" of Mississippi's black legislative caucus. "For every Eddie Carthan, I can count 100 others." Indeed, those who have studied this case have begun to find a widespread pattern of harassment and intimidation of black elected officials around the country through the political use of the courts and judicial system.

In his closing arguments to the jury in the murder trial, Carthan's lawyer told the story of Jesus' arrest and crucifixion between two thieves. "Jesus was destroyed," he said, "not because he was riding around on a donkey, but because he was talking about new things, and people were following him, and he was scaring the Roman authorities who were jealous and wanted to get him out of the way . . . If it happened to the greatest man that we know, cannot it happen to mortals like us, and did not it happen to Eddie Carthan?" To a jury of poor black people, steeped through the preaching of the black church in the Gospel narratives, such an analogy was not lost. It was reported that there was not a dry eye in the courtroom packed with 200 of the mayor's followers on the closing day.

No longer needed as a source of cheap, unskilled labor in an increasingly automated economy, America's black underclass is becoming restive. It is people like Eddie Carthan, who offer hope to the black and poor, that give the folks in power nightmares. ■

The Rev. Nina Alazraqui, left, presents the stole to Nilda Anaya during the ordination rite in Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rican Woman Ordained on Pentecost

Pentecost, 1983 marked the day of ordination, in Puerto Rico, of the Rev. Nilda Anaya, the first Hispanic woman priest outside the continental United States.

About 500 people, including members of the international press corps and Puerto Rican TV, assembled in the stadium at Ponce, converted into a church for the occasion. The Rt. Rev. Francisco Reus-Froylan, Bishop of Puerto Rico, presided. Preacher for the event was the Rev. Nina Olmedo Alazraqui, Director of Centro Hispanico, Brentwood, Cal., the first Hispanic woman to be ordained.

The Rev. Anaya is presently enrolled at General Seminary in New York, pursuing graduate studies in spiritual direction, and eventually plans to open a Retreat House in her native Puerto Rico.

Homosexuals and the Churches

The forthcoming vote by the National Council of Churches on whether to accept the Metropolitan Community Churches into its membership makes the accompanying article by Louie Crew especially timely. The MCC was founded in 1968 "to meet the need for ministry to a largely forgotten, ignored and despised minority, homosexuals." Its members claim that MCC faithfully meets the requirements for membership set forth in the NCC constitution and by-laws.

As the title of Crew's article indicates, many mainline churches have settled into a "pew-sitters only" posture as regards gay men and lesbian women. And the Chicago *Sun-Times* reported recently that "the Orthodox and black denominations are likely to be joined by the Lutheran Church in America and the Episcopal Church, among others, in opposing the membership" of the MCC when the vote is taken by the NCC in November.

THE WITNESS, then, presents the following article at a time when openness and understanding are paramount as gay men and lesbian women struggle for their rights — not only in U.S. society, but in the very churches committed to justice issues.

View from a Gay Person's

I knew that Dad might not live for me to see him again as I got off the bus after the 26-hour journey and caught the cab in 105-degree heat to drive to the nursing home. Mother had died five months earlier after their first 12 days in this place. The three of us had always been very close.

Even through his immense pain, Dad rallied again and again to enjoy our reunion. When I went for the last time, I held his hand to say, "Dad, I know that I have not been the son you wanted, but I love you very, very much." (Who would ever really choose a son whose very identity as a gay person would put the parent through the scornful hoops our church and society routinely require? — so I reasoned, in my heart of hearts.)

Dad took about three minutes as he insisted on pulling himself up to the rail of his bed.

"Louie, you are very wrong. You are the son I wanted! I love you very much."

In scores of ways, the church still insists that my God loves less completely than my biological parent, who died three weeks later.

Wayne Olson, UCC chaplain to campuses in Indianapolis, recently analyzed every major denomination's statements on homosexuality. All, he reported, managed to say "no" by pretending to say "yes." Liberal groups such as UCC, the Unitarians, and the Episcopal Church differ from the more conservative and evangelical mainly in the liberals' relative lack of candor. Rejection is constant, even where masked.

Lesbians and gay men are but one of many of the sexual challenges to the church. With few exceptions, church leaders have retreated from most important sexual issues of our time: overpopulation, family and nurture in America, divorce, nontraditional households, and those who live alone.

It is surely no accident that the soaps, those clear measures of the national 8th-grade mentality, frequently stereotype the person with the funny collar as a sexual dummy out of touch with people in our natural settings. It is no accident that the clergy continue to erode their moral authority when they speak gobbledygook if they speak at all about sexual matters.

In the Episcopal Church, religious word-wizardry is an art form. In early 1976 several of us who are gay advised a commission of General Convention to affirm that lesbians and gays are "Children of God" and are "entitled to the full pastoral love and concern of the church." General Convention passed that wording. I felt a bit silly, as if we had asked the church to ratify Calvary — surely not the right way round. I was naive. I did not recognize how perversely the church interprets *ministry*.

Now, afterwards, many who approved this wording still react to lesbians and gays as though we are the scum of our parishes. An atheist colleague helpfully explains, "Oh,

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Louie Crew, an essayist and poet, has authored more than 400 published works. He is founder of Integrity, a national organization of gay Episcopalians.

Pew by Louie Crew

Louie, that's the way the religious always do it. India recently outlawed naming anyone 'untouchable.' The religious have no problem. They simply call the same people 'Children of God.' That way they can treat them in the same old way."

Call me "scum" if that is the way that you treat me, please.

Ministry is bleaker magic still. About four years ago I started rigorously replacing the word *organization* with the word *ministry* whenever I referred to our movement. Ministry properly stresses the religious character of our work in ways that the secular term organization ignores — so I reasoned. "[Ministry] is a buzz word, of course," explains a gay priest friend of mine, "but one which the church understands, so we use it for politic reasons."

Such reasons are not good enough. We thereby play into some of the less affirming ways that *ministry* plays better in most rectories and dioceses. The patriarchy prepares people to minister without sacrificing in any way their sense of superiority. Furthermore, ministry lacks the sting, the confrontation implicit in organization. The Rev. Anne Garrison stresses most forcefully, "The pastoral approach to the disturbed homosexual is a cop-out in the face of structural and systemic injustice to gays."

Lesbians and gays soon learn how easy it is for a rector or a bishop to allow us to meet in some ecclesiastical basement. We then become beholden to the donor, who can ask us to let up on the more substantial demands of the Gospel.

One bishop is now contemplating giving a sizeable sum to a group of gay Christians so that they can design and administer a program he wants for the street hustlers in his city. This same bishop adamantly refuses even to discuss the problems of the gay clergy and seminarians in his diocese. Certainly the hustlers need ministry, as do heterosexual prostitutes, but heterosexual Christians would rightly protest that ministry to their prostitutes alone does not fulfill the church's minimal obligations to heterosexual Christians.

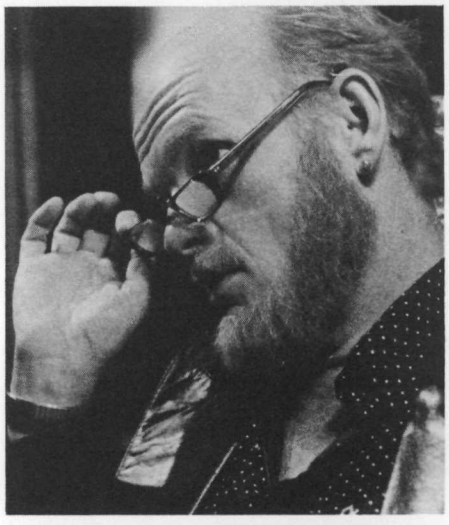
We lesbians and gays operate under tremendous pressure to play according to the rules, and the no. 1 rule in most places is that lesbians and gays are clients. Christ, however, would have us prophets — shakers and movers, tellers of the whole truth.

Possibly from my own bad lead, *Integrity's* current stationery now makes no reference to "gay" or "lesbian," but says simply, "an Episcopal ministry," as if we can get some kind of respectability by grabbing onto the church's coattails. *Respectability* and *integrity* in this case are antonyms. Any respectability the Episcopal Church has to offer its sexual outcasts is won at too great a price if we must forfeit Calvary, scene of God's indiscriminate love for everybody. We surely cannot afford in 1983 to become the theology that dares not name its name, however comfortable our silence might make some people.

We need to get on with the agenda that no one really wants to talk about. The church needs to acknowledge and affirm the lesbians and gays who are clergy and seminarians. Gays require fresh air, the space to affirm God's full love of them. Now the church acts as though God somehow made a mistake in designing gays' body chemistry. The church requires lesbians and gays to lie about who they are if they expect official space to exercise the ministry to which they are called.

I am tired of heterosexual bishops who tell me about unnamed other bishops whom they admit to having seen in late-night gay assignations. When they tell me, they do so as if their gossip is tantamount to affirmation. Gay bishops too need the space in which to be whole, in which to be honest.

Just as important, we must find ways to affirm all lesbians and gays in their struggle to relate to one another. Perhaps with heterosexuals and gays alike, the church should go out of the marriage business altogether, in view of the church's failure to have much positive impact on the marriages which it solemnizes with such great pomp. Maybe we ought to follow Jesus' lead and wish all couples well, even spike their punch as at Cana, but leave the



Louie Crew

real task of marrying where it properly belongs, to the people themselves.

Certainly the church is hypocritical in the extreme with regard to gay relationships. On the one hand, the church condemns us for allegedly not forming stable relationships. On the other, the church strictly forbids us to form such relationships. The ostrich interests us less for its head than for what it so flagrantly leaves to full view.

The truth is that many lesbians and gays, in every town in America, in spite of all kinds of abuse, have affirmed one another in a variety of relationships. Many, many more lesbians and gays have no access to such evidence, since most good relationships are by nature fragile. Many lovers refuse to subject themselves to the hostility which the public readily heaps upon gay couples who declare themselves as such.

Meanwhile, most clergy remain dismally ignorant about our issues, and most Episcopal seminaries have barely budged, if at all, to address that ignorance. The church routinely ordains ministers and counselors who have not done basic homework regarding at least 5 to 10% of the communities whom they will serve. Heterosexuals would not for a moment license priests before they had at least survey courses in family problems, yet 80 to 90% of seminary graduates would be hard put even to identify D. Sherwin Bailey, John McNeill, or John Boswell, much less to summarize their pioneering scholarship regarding homosexuals and the Christian traditions.

We have had three important decades of gay Christian scholarship, but to what avail if those in charge don't read it? Similar pioneering in almost any other theological area would have sent divinity scholars scurrying to the darkest corners of libraries for evidence to corroborate or refute new claims.

Few of our seminaries bother even to take publications by lesbian and gay Christians, and some seminarians would be hard put to name more than one of the dozen or more special gay and lesbian ministries within Christendom. Very few have bothered to visit such groups. One seminarian admitted to me recently, "You just can't hope to get ahead in the church if you risk messing around with those known to be *queer.*"

It is a severe indictment of the church that good old boys like Mike Douglas, Dick Cavatt, David Susskind, and Phil Donohue do more in any one month to confront Christians with the sexual issues of the 20th century than church leaders have done in eight decades.

The church is thus a dangerous place for lesbians and gays unless we want to violate our integrity by denying our sexuality. Too many of us join and become a part of the problem, assuming that the Gospel really is about respectability. We gays have given tons of stained glass and enough organ pipe to circle the globe at least twice; yet we can't say, "Tell the truth!" I believe that we are fooling ourselves if we think people will change without our telling who we are and what we need.

Gays and lesbians who go near the established church must be fully grounded in God's prior affirmation of us. We must go to minister, not to be ministered to. Those of us who need to lick our wounds, need to do so in safer hospices which we must create for ourselves.

On a very rare occasion, an Anglican prelate, Bishop Barry Valentine, came one Sunday night in 1981 to a cocktail party the local Gay Academic Union gave when I visited the University of Manitoba. Bishop Valentine was one of only two "certified" straight people at the large gathering. After the munch circuit, he took me aside: "Louie," he said, "I understand that you have agreed to speak to a conference of my clergy tomorrow morning. I have let all know that I will be there too, because I want them to see that I believe this issue is important. Let me suggest to you some things, based on who will be there. Mainly there will be three groups: first, those who already agree with you but want to know what to do; second, those who will never agree with you, but still need to minister to the gays within their midst; and finally, those who haven't made up their minds, but still need to stop delaying their ministry."

That is an overseer, a real bishop speaking. I can count on my fingers the number of such bishops I know, almost with a hand left over.

Lesbians and gays can teach much about risking for the sake of the good news that God loves everybody. Because we have so little to gain from further deception once we declare who we are, lesbians and gays should be able to help enormously as heterosexuals examine their exclusive problems with child-abuse and wife-abuse. I believe that it is no accident that lesbians and gays have all along gravitated in large numbers into the service professions, as teachers, social workers, psychologists, priests, and other ministers.

Gays and lesbians have much to give to revitalize corporate worship and liturgy. Our services have the intensity of the catacombs. We live the paradox that one is happy when persecuted. Gospel glee has always been the special province of the scandalous, from Mary Magdalen who washed Jesus' feet, to the dying thief on the next cross, right down to the next older gay to genuflect — an unending line of outcasts reclaimed.

Most important, gay males and lesbians can give to the church new models of courage, not those of the Church Militant with Christian soldiers marching as to war, but the model of the town sissy or the town dyke with more strength than anyone else, the strength to risk being oneself. ■

Letters . . . *Continued from page 2*

the Executive Council, the Church Pension Fund, the General Board of Examining Chaplains, the Trustees of the General Theological Seminary, and the Church Deployment Board. Any member of the church is eligible and nomination forms may be obtained through the chairperson, the Rt. Rev. Donald James Parsons, Diocese of Quincy, 3601 N. North St., Peoria, Ill. 61604, or any member of the Nominating Committee.

Deadline for nominations is Nov. 1, 1984.

Members of the committee in addition to Bishop Parsons are the Rt. Rev. John Forsythe Ashby, Bishop of Western Kansas; the Rt. Rev. Emerson Paul Haynes, Bishop of Southwestern Florida; the Rev. Christian Hovde, Chicago; the Very Rev. Donald McPhail, Denver; the Rev. Jesse F. Anderson, Washington, D.C., and the following laypersons: Charity Weymouth, Diocese of Maine; Ralph Spence, Texas; Harry Griffiths, Central Florida; George Lockwood, El Camino Real; George Browne, New York, and Marie Evans, Virgin Islands.

Your courtesy in publishing this information is appreciated.

The Very Rev. Donald S. McPhail
Denver, Colo.

Editorial . . . *Continued from page 3*

conscience, who are seeking ways to resolve world conflicts through *nonviolent means, and ways to* invest our wealth and energy in peace.

— upon the American public to turn the arms race into a "peace race," utilizing the existent and evolving movements in the United States as its foundation.

And regarding *freedom,* the Coalition calls:

— upon the American people to renew their commitment to the cause of human rights and to resist the rising tide of extremism reflected in the rebirth of bombings and increased brutalities by the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazi groups, and in some places by the enforcement agencies.

— for vigorous work to defeat *anti-civil rights legislation and to* reverse recent government trends which have sought to roll back and weaken the enforcement of civil rights laws and policies.

— upon the nation to work for full and equal rights for women and to secure legal and economic equity for women in the workforce.

— for implementation of domestic and foreign policies that reflect the best values of the American people by promoting respect for and protection of human rights.

— for the end of repression of every sort, whether it be the economic, social and cultural rights that are denied, or civil and political rights that are abridged.

Finally, the Coalition supports the struggle of workers to organize in free trade unions and "opposes corporate America's partnership with the racist apartheid regime in South Africa." It also "opposes the militarization of internal conflicts, often abetted and even encouraged by massive U.S. arms exports in areas of the world such as the Middle East and Central America, while their basic human problems are neglected." Further, the Coalition "urges the U.S. government to eliminate its ideological and racial biases in our nation's refugee and asylum policies and practices."

This comprehensive list of rallying points summarizes most themes around which THE WITNESS has published since its rebirth in 1974. As our 10th anniversary year approaches, we are privileged to endorse the goals of the New Coalition and urge our readers to join the march, if they possibly can. We pray that Martin Luther King's dream may yet come true — with our collective efforts united toward its fulfillment.

(M.L.S. and the editors)

CREDITS
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Seek Nominations for M. L. King Award

Nominations are being sought for the sixth annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Award which will be presented in January, 1984, to a person or group who is making a significant contribution to the nonviolent struggle for a peaceful and just society.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation orginated the Award in 1979 to recognize unheralded persons who are working in the tradition of Martin Luther King, Jr. and to address the concern that although King is revered as a national hero, the radical nature of his understanding and practice of nonviolence is often overlooked. The Award is presented at a celebration near the home of the honoree.

Nominations should be submitted in the form of a typed letter, at least one but not more than four pages in length, describing the work for which the person or group is being nominated. Supporting material (i.e. newspaper clips, writings by the nominee) may also be included, but should not exceed three pages.

Please limit nominations to persons/groups in the U.S. only. Send nominations to Marci Ameluxen, FOR, P.O. Box 271, Nyack, N.Y. 10960, by Oct. 1.

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