



The Prophet

Smithsonian African American Association

Volume I, Number 2

Summer 1990

We Can Make A Change!

Mandela: For the Freedom of His People

by Freida Austin

How many things or people notions do we bring with us into the world, how many possibilities and also restrictions of possibility....To understand just one life, you have to swallow the world.¹

I saw him enter. He walked ever so humbly, yet appeared strong in constitution. As Nelson Mandela walked onto the platform of the Washington Convention Center on June 25th so did the spirits of other Black Africans of the continent and in the Diaspora.

The audience of thousands vented thunderous thuds of foot stomping similar to toyi-toyi, the foot language of the revolutionary Black South African dance of celebration. The assembly rose from their seats. I stood too, feeling slightly overwhelmed by the energy, warmth and unity of the crowd. Then all at once, this overwhelming wonderful reality was interrupted by unsettling thoughts.

My brothers and sisters, the people of Tokoza, Botshabelo are shot and tear-gassed during demonstrations in this Era of Negotiations. I stood remembering scenes from the television news, where I witnessed men, women and children crying in the streets. Anarchy reigns in their ghettos, where a woman's child was badly battered and someone's husband was slashed. In living color, I saw South Africans running from the police; several were knocked down by the forceful thrusts of clubs, while others were grounded by shot guns.

Suddenly, I am chilled because my memory is unable to flee the sounds of



South African leader Nelson Mandela and wife Winnie Mandela (Photo courtesy of the Afro-American newspaper)

this barbaric chaos. Black people are dying by the thousands. Is there no commiseration in the heart of an oppressor? What do they fight about some want to know?

Apartheid.

What do many of them die for others inquire?

Apartheid.

What is apartheid?

Apartheid is a venomous scheme to unjustly perpetuate white dominance, greed and privilege.

There is a hush of silence in the Convention Center auditorium. Mandela takes his place center stage. Abruptly, an African American man jumps to his feet and shouts, "Viva! Viva! Viva, Nelson Mandela! Nelson Mandela! One man, one vote." The audience cheers. The program begins.

My eyes are cloudy now, but the tears refuse to fall. "What's next?" I ask my friend. "Need there be more blood in

the streets? Civil War? What about the sanctions? Will they be lifted? The experiences of the struggle leave an indelible print on one's character which changes one's approach to life's challenges. In battle, soldiers look death in the face and recognize that their courage will carry them far. In the business world, such experiences can be advantageous if the results are calmness under pressure, an ability to trust, and a willingness to take risks for a favorable outcome.

Although it will take further struggle for the Smithsonian Institution to achieve its goal of cultural equity and for our country to rid itself of racism, horrendous crimes, drugs, poverty, and famine, we must remain loyal to our aspirations. Mr. Nelson Mandela is a celebrated example of the fact that when we hold steadfast to our goals: WE CAN MAKE A CHANGE! ■

¹Callaloo No. 32, Volume 10, Number 3, The Johns Hopkins University Press, ISSN 0161 - 2492.

SAAA INAUGURATION

by Jo Ann Webb

Ultimately, all change is in the hands of people. That was the message that Representative William Gray, Majority Whip of the House of Representatives, delivered to a standing-room-only crowd at the Smithsonian African American Association inauguration on May 22. He urged SAAA to demand change, to organize for change and to press forward for change. "Your willingness to stand fast and monitor those issues that are of interest to you, your ability to identify those individuals and resources that can help you achieve your objectives and the energy and the tenacity with which you pursue these goals will determine the long term impact of SAAA," Gray said to the hundreds of people who packed the Carmichael Auditorium at the National Museum of American History.

Gray's message was one of hope and inspiration. In a sermon-style deliverance, not unusual for this Baptist minister, he spoke of positive change, of accountability. Gray praised SAAA for its efforts to make a difference. The inaugural event, he said, could be the genesis of an influential and respective voice within the Smithsonian. "The impact that you have, the changes you engender, the progress you make will depend on you, not on anyone else," Gray said.

Citing the number of African Americans employed by the Smithsonian—slightly more than one third of the overall employee population—Gray spoke of their empowerment to bring about change in the Institution's plans, programs and decisions. "This strong numerical base is important and should not be underestimated," Gray said. However, he warned African Americans not to rejoice in numbers alone, nor to be fooled by abstract figures that are not a true indicator of the Institution's commitment to fair



and equal hiring practices. "Yes, there has been quantitative progress but there must also be a commitment to qualitative inroads. And there, I am told, is room for much needed improvement," Gray added.

Secretary Adams, in his remarks, acknowledged that the Institution faces no higher responsibility than to address issues of cultural diversity. The SAAA, according to Adams, is an influential vehicle in effecting change in the Institution. Its impact, Adams noted, extends to issues of equal opportunity employment, collecting, public programming and much more. "SAAA has a very important role to play in keeping the Institution on track," he noted.

Keeping the institution on track should be a vigil, Gray said. "It means reachin' landin's, and turnin' corners and sometimes goin' in the dark where there ain't been no light," he said, referring to Langston Hughes' poem *Mother to Son*. "I hope that the SAAA will always have as its creed, its desire and its commitment to climb, to reach landings, to turn corners and to take the light where there hasn't been any light."

Using the analogy of a race car driver who tries to win a race by driving a car using only half of its cylinder, Gray said, "Until every person in America has no barriers based upon their

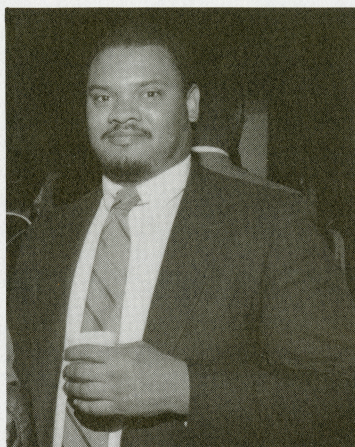
color, their gender, their national origin, or religion... then America is running the race of life, not on all of its cylinders, but only on a few.... If the Smithsonian is to be all that it can be then it must be running on all its cylinders with equal opportunities and an ever-increasing inclusiveness for all employees at every level."

For Phyllis Cunningham, Portrait Gallery program manager and co-chairperson of SAAA, Gray's speech was one of rejuvenation. "We have to be the ones to address the hard issues of racism and discrimination, and we are committed to doing just that. We stand ready to assist the Institution in meeting the challenge with which we are faced. Congressman Gray left us with a message of hope, the challenge to make a difference and the belief that we can make a change," Cunningham said.

The inauguration was a major milestone for the SAAA who celebrated its first-year anniversary in May. "Change does not come easy," Cunningham added. "The SAAA's mission statement is embedded in the belief that now is the time for change. If not *now*, when? And if not us, who? ■

Kinard's Korner

SAAA Salutes ...



Michael Barnes works in the Duplicating Branch of the Office of Printing and Photographic Services.

He began work at the Smithsonian 15 years ago as an offset-press helper and over the years has moved up through the ranks to his current position as offset-press leader. He is proud of the service his branch renders to the entire Smithsonian.

Barnes is currently pursuing a certificate in computer applications. He began his studies at his own expense. "My wife kept encouraging me to go back to school. She insisted that with all the educational emphasis within the Smithsonian, there must be some support for employee continuing education," Barnes said.

Initially, he was told that employee educational help was unavailable. Then, Michael attended a workshop sponsored by the Smithsonian Training Office and learned about the Continuing Education Program (CEP). Through CEP, Michael receives tuition, a stipend for books and materials, and some work-release time to attend classes at Montgomery Community College. Both his supervisor and branch director are supportive.

Barnes believes in giving back to the community. As a result, he directs the youth program at his church, Trinity Baptist. ■

MOVING WITH A MISSION!

Kudos For A Job Well Done

The Building Management Division supervisors at the Air and Space Museum have established monthly awards banquets to celebrate outstanding individuals on the BMD staff. Employees are presented with awards for a job-well-done. This means of recognition initiated by custodial supervisor Kathleen Fleming includes plaques, certificates and pins for honorees. The BMD staff believes this type of appreciation will boost moral and create better working relationships between supervisors and employees.



Awards recipients (left to right) Donna Grady, James Martin, Wilbert Bellamy, Robert Fleming, Tina Tyson, Brenda Averett, Robert Reid, Annie Sullivan, Samuel Parker, Annette Nicksen, Adrianne Hook, Gerald Sarto, Roberto Pulos, Gillette Simms, Catherine Meade, Annie Harris, Clara Spinner, Tari Miller, John Ammons (not shown).

EMPOWERING PEOPLE!

A General Equivalency Degree (GED) program is available for employees who have not received a high school diploma. Designed to improve basic skills in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies, the class meets on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. For information call Carol Gover in the Office of Equal Opportunity, 287-3805.

For SAAA Membership Information, contact:

NMAH

Floyd Harris, 357-2340
Helen Holley, 357-2414
Mel Welch, 357-1950

NASM

Toni Amos, 357-1427

AA/PG

Carole Broadus, 357-4647

L'ENFANT

Faye Thompson, 287-3100 x 217

HMSG

Teresia Bush, 357-3235
James Hilton, 357-3091

SISC

Ricardo T. Williams, 357-1630
Michael Barnes, 357-1497

NZP

Mildred Haltiwanger, 673-4718
Helen Rice, 673-4773

Point of View

Daily, I encounter fellow employees stymied in their growth who have become disenchanted. They feel that the Smithsonian isn't interested in them, nor in the contributions made by them. I can understand their despair, but I try to convince them that hard work does get noticed. I know that their work indeed makes a difference, for the Institution's ability to function comes not only from the top, but the middle and bottom as well.

For example, the Smithsonian can't finalize a contract without the help of the typists in Procurement, nor obligate funds without having the data entered by keypunchers, nor pay bills without accounting technicians. We can't run our offices without receptionists and secretaries, nor pay employees without payroll clerks. The warehouse can't operate without laborers, nor can countless sacks of mail be delivered without clerks. We can't even open the doors of our museums without maintenance and security staff.

Management must become sensitized to the vital role each job plays in running the Smithsonian. No matter what level one has reached, we all have a desire to progress. Instead of looking outside the agency for applicants, it would be a welcomed change to prepare in-house employees for a number of vacancies. Many employees are already able to move into existing vacancies. All that is needed is the opportunity from management to make the transition. ■

—Charlotte Brown

Angela Davis: Then and Now

By Jacqueline Hicks Graizette



It began with a trip to "I Dream a World: Portraits of Black Women that Changed America," the breathtaking exhibition that ran last summer at the Corcoran Gallery of Art. I stood before the black and white photograph of a tall black woman, leaning against a tree, her face framed by light-colored dreadlocks. She had a soft, gentle expression. It took me a few seconds to realize it was Angela Davis. So dramatically different was this presentation from the frequent images of her portrayed by the American media. In those brief moments I realized that I too had bought into the myth of what much of white America was telling me she was: loud, militant, defiant and threatening.

I first learned of Angela Davis, Bobby Seale, and the Black Panthers during the late sixties, when I was about 10 years old. Memphis, Tennessee, was in the violent throes of racial anomosities; Martin Luther King Jr. had been killed earlier while trying to help sanitation workers rise above minimum wage, followed by Elton Hayes, a black youth savagely beaten to death by white policemen during a routine traffic write-up. For us, the messages of black power and self protection that emerged from these younger civil rights leaders were right on time. I can remember sitting in front of the television set watching the news with my parents, hoping that none of them, especially Angela Davis, would be convicted.

Incarcerated for over a year awaiting her trial, Angela was finally acquitted.

Twenty-five years have passed in America. The Black Panther Party no longer exists. The sanitation workers in Memphis received their raise. Racism and its effects have supposedly diminished. The optimist would probably tell me my life story is proof positive that these people and their movements were not in vain. I went from a segregated, poor neighborhood of Memphis, to the halls of Harvard, to a quiet, integrated neighborhood in Bowie, Maryland. No one has burned a cross in my yard or ever, to my knowledge, denied me an employment opportunity because of my color. Somehow I can hear the pessimist laughing as I make that statement and bitterly reminding me that I only need to walk from the Bowie fringe Metro lot to my front door and I will not be able to miss the chalk scribbled sidewalk note: "No spooks," a teenager's declaration that me and my kind, are still where we were 25 years ago.

It is this very ambiguity about the current state of race relations that makes it necessary to go and revisit from time to time the civil rights movement, to hear its leaders reflect on an era that so dramatically impacted this nation. That is one reason the Resident Associate Program's Afro-American Studies Department chose to go forth with a program focusing on a civil rights leader. Who is Angela Davis - the person? What builds this sort of character?

In today's society where polls tell us that the citizenry is skeptical of leadership and its commitment, what creates people who are perceived as seriously committed, people like Angela Davis, Nelson Mandela, Mitch Snyder—people who give everything and risk their lives for issues? We owe them a forum to talk about who they are and we owe ourselves an opportunity to learn about leadership. ■



Jacob Lawrence, *The Library*, 1960. Photograph courtesy National Museum of American Art

Education is learning all that is worthwhile knowing, not to be crammed with the subject matter of the book or the philosophy of the classroom, but to store away in your heads such facts as you need for the daily application of life, so that you may be better in all things, understand your fellow man and interpret your relationship to your creator....You must never stop learning. The world's greatest men and women are people who educated themselves outside of the university with all the knowledge that the university gives, and you have the opportunity of doing the same thing the university student does — read and study.

—Marcus Garvey

D.C. Science Teachers Explore Smithsonian Teaching Resources

by Phyllis Cunningham

The Natural Science Institute for Teachers of Minority Students (NSIFTMS), a cooperative teacher training project between the National Museum of Natural History and D.C. Public Schools, conducted a series of workshops to train teachers how to "read" natural history objects and how to incorporate museum education into the regular school curriculum. During July, 15 science teachers, kindergarten through 10th grades and science-methods professors from the University of the District of Columbia, participated in three weeks of workshops, field trips, and practical teaching experiences. They learned firsthand about interpreting scientific objects in the museums and how to use natural science resources at the Smithsonian, such as the Naturalist Center, the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center and the National Zoo. Workshops were taught by museum educators, curators, technicians and science professors of leading universities and colleges.

Carmel Ervin, program director for NSIFTMS, and secondary education specialist for the Museum of Natural History, designed the project after working with the D.C. school system. The project was funded through the Dwight D. Eisenhower Act. During the coming academic year, Ervin will continue to consult with area science teachers, conduct training workshops, develop a newsletter and appoint a museum education advisory board.

The partnership between the Museum of Natural History and D.C. Public Schools is a shining example of the rewards and benefits to be gained through collaborative programs. The NSIFTMS workshop series has been an overwhelming success, serving as an inspiration to the Smithsonian and its local community, and as a model for the nation. ■

At The Smithsonian

Anacostia Museum

Adult Poetry Workshop with Valerie Jean. Fri., Sept. 14 at 10 a.m. For reservations, call 287-3369.

Air and Space Museum

"Exploring the Universe with Christopher Columbus Ant." Astrophysicist Jeff Goldstein conducts astronomy program for school children. Sat., Sept. 8 at 9:30 a.m. Albert Einstein Planetarium.

Resident Associate Program (RAP)

An Evening with John Wideman: Voices from Black Male Writers. Tues., Sept. 11 at 7:30 p.m. Hirshhorn Museum. For ticket information call 357-3030.

CELEBRATE HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH September 15 - October 15

American History

Smithsonian Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration. Welcoming Remarks by Secretary Robert Adams, introduction by Rep. Esteben Torres (D-CA), and the keynote address by Louis Valdez, director of *La Bamba*. The program includes a panel discussion by members of the original Teatro Campesino Repertory Theater Company and a film premiere of the founding of Teatro Campesino. Carmichael Aud. FREE. Fri., Oct. 12 at Noon.

American Art

Arte Comprometido: The tradition of Social and Political Commentary in Latin American Art. Luis R. Cancel, Executive Director, The Bronx

Museum of the Arts, discusses the art and history of Mexico and Puerto Rico. Lecture Hall. FREE. Sun., Oct. 14 at 3 p.m.

Natural History

Life, Death, and Medical Intervention in Ancient Peru. John Verano will discuss the practice of trephination, a surgical procedure. Baird Aud. FREE. Fri., Sept. 12 at Noon.

Portrait Gallery

Cultures in Motion "An Afternoon with Nicholasa Mohr." The Puerto Rican writer speaks on the topic "The Journey toward a Common Ground: Hispanic Americans in the United States from 1940 to Present." Lecture Hall. FREE. Sun., Sept. 30 at 3 p.m. For reservations call 357-2729.

Resident Associate Program (RAP)

Fiesta Fun, Lulu Delachre, author, illustrator of *Arroz con Leche* and *Las Navidades*, teaches children's songs, games, and dances of Puerto Rico. Classrooms B and C, Natural History. Sat. Sept. 22 at 10 a.m. For ticket information call 357-3030. ■

The Book Shelf

Hill, Robert A., *Marcus Garvey: Life and Lessons*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987.

Mandela, Winnie. *Part of My Soul Went with Him*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985

Davis, Angela. *Angela Davis: With My Mind on Freedom/An Autobiography*. New York: Random House, Inc. 1974.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Thank you for honoring my husband in the Spring 1990 issue of "The Prophet." The children and I were overcome with deep emotion at reading his paper, which was presented at the American Association of Museums Conference in New Orleans. The dedication of the "Kinard's Korner" will serve as a living and lasting tribute to his memory.

John loved the Smithsonian and worked within its structure to affect change for the upward mobility of its Afro-American employees. He loved history and had a keen knowledge of the purpose God had for his life. He was a strong, compassionate, and blessed man.

Sincerely,
Marjorie A. Kinard

Dear Editor:

African Heritage Research Library (AHRL), the first rural community-based African Studies Library on the Continent, received with thanks "The Prophet" from you. We are an international self-funding and non-profit library, supported by gifts and donations from lovers of Africa all over the world. Our collection is mainly on African, African Americans and Blacks worldwide.

You have been nicely introduced to us. We are therefore requesting you to please donate personally to the library, African and African American titles of your own choice—in any discipline. Please put us on your mailing list to receive copies of "The Prophet."

We appreciate your support of AHRL as a depository for publications relevant to Africans all over the world. Thanks. We are eagerly expecting to hear from you. AHRL counts very much on you and thinks so highly of you!

Sincerely Yours,
Bayo Adebawale, Director/Founder
African Heritage Research Library
NIGERIA - WEST AFRICA ■

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