

The Afro-American Association

The CALIFORNIA

The program of the Afro-American Association, with headquarters in San Francisco, California, is based on the premise that although most of the disabilities of Black Americans today stem from the days of slavery and continuing discrimination, they will not be solved merely by integration into the white world, even if that were possible. We have launched a two-pronged attack in the field of education and economic advancement with emphasis on community self help and motivation.

We do not oppose the civil rights movement, but feel that the approach outlined by the leaders of this movement suffers from great defects and must be buttressed by other programs. Much of the civil

rights struggle is taken up with establishing voting rights and desegregating public facilities in the South and integrating housing, opening up white collar jobs and breaking down de facto school segregation in the North. These struggles do not have a direct connection with the solution of the most pressing problems of Afro-Americans.

The extension of voting rights does not necessarily produce power. The highest expression of voting is found in Detroit (Diggs), Los Angeles (Hawkins), Chicago (Dawson), Philadelphia (Nix), and New York (Powell), but it is precisely in these cities that one finds the biggest slums and crime rate and the most

lethargy and fatalism among Afro-Americans. It is deceitful to present voting as a panacea. The effect is a blind worshipping of constitutional forms.

As for the freedom riders, everything they are seeking to obtain—an opportunity to eat, sleep, etc., in a place of one's choice—we have with a few exceptions enjoyed in the North for several decades. We are, therefore, in an excellent position to inform our brothers that even after they "arrive"—and I think they will eventually—they will be no better off than the masses of Blacks in the North: crime, welfare, public housing, slums, bleaching creams, physical self hatred and all.

The purpose of schools is educa-

Students in the laboratory of one of the schools run by the Afro-American Association in San Francisco



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tion and desegregation is presumably a means to that end. Evidence does not, however, support the contention that learning comes faster by desegregation. Most students who attend schools, whether integrated or segregated, get only average grades, drop out or flunk out. This is very clear from an evaluation of Howard University where one cannot tell from a look at grades whether a student is from the North or South. In fact, Southern students tend to perform better. The best grades are obtained by West Indians and Africans. The real problem is motivation. Jews and Chinese go to private (separate is an ugly word) and de facto segregated schools without becoming inferior. We do not maintain that private schools are a necessity, but we insist that regardless of the racial composition of the school we must have motivation.

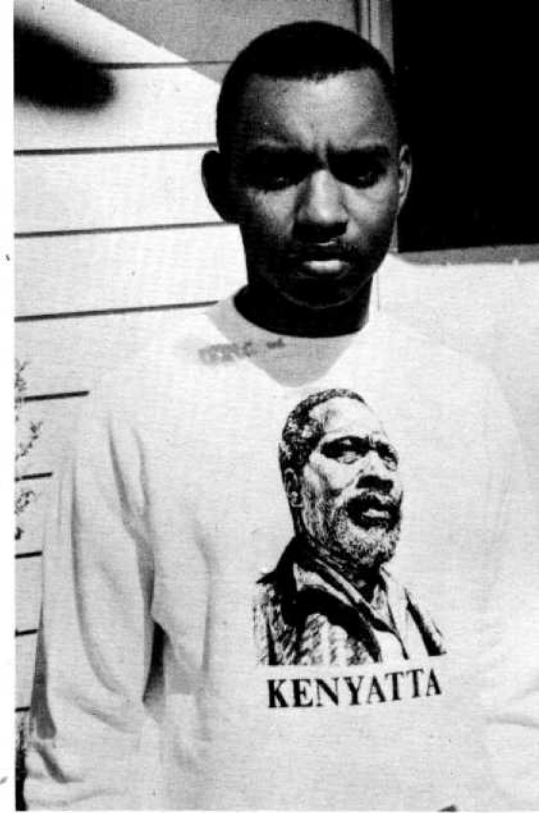
Lack of motivation among our people stems from lack of purpose. We go for a Cadillac while other minority groups have a more sustaining purpose—similar to that of African students—to make a contribution toward the development of the group as a whole. In short, we have no racial pride. We have little knowledge of our past either in the United States or in Africa. Jews go to Jewish schools to learn about Jews. Chinese go to Chinese schools to learn about Chinese, whites go to white schools to learn about whites. But Blacks go to white schools to learn about whites—from George Washington to JFK. World history is tantamount to white history.

The study of Africa is crucial to developing pride and purpose. In Africa we can see the decisions made by our people and their power and strength and thus derive confidence, pleasure, and a sense of

destiny and obligation—all elements of dignity. This is the reason that no minority group begins the study of their history with the period they entered America, regardless of the great contributions they have made here. They begin in their respective "home lands." Ever since arriving in this country all significant decisions affecting the welfare of Afro-Americans have been made by whites. This was certainly true under slavery and even true of the operation of the Underground Railway, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, the 1954 Supreme Court decision, JFK's recent housing directive, etc. The few Blacks who have made decisions are rightfully suspected of "playing for the Man." How can we derive purpose and dignity from such a history?

Our sense of dignity must be based upon our African past, and now is a most opportune time to strengthen our ties with our African brothers. Africans are certainly in favor of establishing such bonds, and they themselves are in the process of reestablishing their own pride and dignity. In the recent past Ghanaians who wanted to be Englishmen and Guineans who wanted to be Frenchmen stood in the way of social and cultural interchange. Our desire to be not Afro-Americans, but only Americans, was an even greater barrier to such communication. The gates are now down, let us establish real communication in every walk of life.

In the economic field, jobs available to Afro-Americans are few and inferior. One hundred years of waiting for white benefactors to improve this situation should have proved by now that a change will not come from that quarter. We must develop our own



Donald Warden, Chairman of the Afro-American Association.

well planned businesses where efficiency, thrift and sacrifice are stressed. The market for such industries exists. Even in a segregated U.S.A. a white buyer will buy competitive goods made by black owned industries, especially since he need not know who made them. There is also a market in Africa; if we could manufacture all the goods purchased by Africa in the U.S.A., we could supply many jobs.

The capital for such industries also is available from our own community, if it could be diverted from the consumption of alcohol, bleaching creams and preachers' Cadillacs.

What we lack are the skills and the desire to obtain skills. The Afro-American Association's program is remedying this problem through its schools and classes which instill motivation and provide the opportunity to learn. Most of the crimes we commit are against ourselves; with a feeling of real dignity and group respect we can attack our basic problems under the slogans of "Act Black" and "Buy Black."