

U.S. Parole Board Under Attack From Inmates

AFRICAN NAMES FOR BLACK NEWBORN:

A SYMBOL OF GROWING PRIDE

Copyright 1971 DNS Int. VIA DISPATCH NEWS SERVICE New York (Community News Service)—Until recently, black parents were answering Shakespeare's "What's in a name?" by memorializing through their children such historic figures as Roosevelt, Lincoln, and Washington.

But now Harlem's side streets ring with such cries as "Lumumba, dinner's ready" and its stores with "Kenyatta, don't touch that."

And according to Harlem Hospital, which reported more than 60 African names out of a total of 233 births in January, there'll also be a lot of Angelas (named for Angela Davis) running around soon.

"We've finally reached a point where we're acting like proud, black people and it's time for us to show it in the children who are coming up," commented the mother of three-month-old Lumumba Baraka Pryor.

"I hope he'll emulate the men he's named for. Both men (Patrice Lumumba and Imamu Amiri Baraka, or Leroi Jones) contributed a great deal to the black struggle for liberation and as he grows up, I'll tell him who they are and what they stand for," said 22-year-old Jackie Gives, Lumumba's mother, in explaining the trend toward African and Arabic names.

The trend, noticeable in the publication of numerous books on the subject, birth records from hospitals located in black communities, and inquiries made at the Schomburg Collection of Negro Life and History in Harlem, has become increasingly popular.

"Inquiries come in every day," lamented an overworked Ruth Ann Stewart, assistant curator of the famed Schomburg Collection. "We try to help as many people as we can over the phone, but we also encourage them to come in and do individual research on the meanings and translations of names."

Books in the collection, which houses numerous Swahili and Yoruba dictionaries, are reportedly wearing out from overuse. "There's definitely a growing interest in African names and I suspect we'll hear a lot of them in the near future," said Ms. Stewart.

Omar, Nairobi, Tonya, Tarshian, Kenyatta, Tamara, Kobie Modeira, Africanus and Taifa (Swahili for nation) are other popular names of toddlers in the Harlem community.

The Drum and Spear Press, a black publishing company in Washington, D.C., reports it is now in its second printing of a publication entitled "The Book of African Names". The \$1, 42-page paperback contains popular West, East and Central African names and meanings and is the company's second best-selling book.

"More than 5,000 copies have been sold since it came out less than a year ago," said Garret Stark, Drum and Spear's promotion manager. Several other publications, many of them only mimeographed sheets published by cultural groups or individual researchers, have also come out on the subject, she said.

"We've gotten orders from Vietnam and cities in the South," she noted, adding that the trend toward African names is not confined to such large cities as New York and Washington, D.C.

"Black people have to go through a total renaissance," said Les Campbell, head of a black political and cultural complex in Brooklyn called The East. "We have to look toward that which identifies us with our backgrounds." All four of his daughters—Kweli, Nandi, Taifa and Domali—have African names.

"It's not just enough to have the hair and the dashiki," said black anthropologist and history professor at Mary Mount College, Dr. Yosef ben Jochannan. "The name is important, too. It's all part of our reawakening."

by Karl Purnell [Mr. Purnell is Washington correspondent for Dispatch News Service International.]

Washington, D.C.—When 261 women prisoners staged a general strike at the Alderson Federal Penitentiary in West Virginia this fall, their primary goal was no less than the reform of the powerful bureaucracy which controls their freedom.

"Having observed the workings of the U.S. Parole Board and its effects on our sisters here, we join with the prisoners of the Federal Prisons at Danbury and Springfield in demanding that necessary changes be made," they wrote in a signed statement of protest.

The riot and the demands were virtually ignored by the press, although as a result sixty-six women were exiled to a reformatory in Kentucky and additional male guards hired at the prison to prevent further outbreaks.

The U.S. Parole Board also came under recent attack by a group of prisoners at the Danbury Federal Penitentiary in Connecticut who asked for a congressional investigation of the parole board.

"We protest the operations of the Federal Parole Board. At present the Board conducts its business arbitrarily in secret and with maximum delay. Its methods place the board's act beyond public scrutiny," they wrote.

These harsh attacks on the parole board came as a surprise to many penal officials who have traditionally considered parole as a privilege which prison inmates could earn if they proved themselves deserving.

Now, with increased public awareness of the need for prison reform, the parole board has lost its traditional immunity from criticism.

One former prisoner who recently was released from the federal penitentiary in Lewisburg has called the board a "bastion of arbitrary and unchecked power."

"The parole board is simply another club for keeping discipline. It keeps the prisoners so up-tight they never have a chance to think about rehabilitation," he said.

The board consists of eight full-time members appointed by the President for six-year overlapping terms, eight examiners, and a support and clerical staff, all based in Washington. There are no local federal parole boards, and the examiners must travel to the various federal prisons to review a prisoner's file and request for parole.

Dissatisfaction with the board's actions centers around three areas. First, many prisoners say that it takes too long to find out whether parole has been granted. According to the Danbury prisoners, delays in reporting run six to eight weeks for an inmate to find out whether he will be released.

Secondly, the board is being faulted for keeping secret dossiers which prisoners are not allowed to see. In many cases, a prisoner is "written up" by a guard, the report is placed in his parole file and the offender has no way of determining the accuracy of the charge. This, it is claimed, allows the prison guards an unchecked and arbitrary power over the inmates.

Finally, the board is not required to inform a prisoner why his parole is not granted. This, it is argued, leads to arbitrary decisions.

To George Reed, the heavy-set articulate chairman of the parole board, these criticisms are unfounded. A political appointee under the Nixon administration, Reed claims that prisoners usually find out what is in their files from the prison's parole officer and that reporting is usually accomplished in a few days. As for telling a prisoner why parole is denied, Reed says: "If we give reasons, an inmate's lawyer could take us to court and question our findings."

Reed claims that the Board's decisions are based solely on the prisoner's behaviour in prisons and his chances of re-adjusting to society if released.

When questioned about the Board's refusal to grant parole to a political prisoner, such as Dan Berrigan who would seem to meet all requirements for parole, Reed says simply: "I will not discuss that case."

This gap between the reality of a prisoner's world and the

conceptions of the world as seen by the members of the parole board shows no sign of narrowing. Backed up by federal statute which calls parole a privilege, the board stands secure in its position.

Nevertheless, the growing sentiment for a change in the prison system, particularly in the post-Attica atmosphere of America, now threatens even the seemingly indestructible U.S. Board of Parole. (Copyright 1971 Dispatch News Service International.)



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H.I.P. -- The Alternative In Harrisburg

There's a new newspaper in town—the Harrisburg Independent Press. With offices at 1004 N. Third Street, Harrisburg, H.I.P. is now entering its second month of publication. It is the product of the full-time efforts of five dedicated people—Edward Zuckerman, Anita Harris, Mary Walsh, Dick Sassaman and Sarah Forth.

Zuckerman, who recently gave up his post of Editor in favor of the "more democratic" editorial staff, is largely responsible for the paper's early success. Originally the brainchild of Fred Soloway of the Harrisburg 8 defense committee, H.I.P. owes its existence to the organizing and recruiting abilities of Mr. Zuckerman. Contacted in July of this year, Zuckerman went to work and, with the help of his colleagues, produced the first issue on October 7, 1971.

As stated in the first issue, the Harrisburg Independent Press is

a "...truly independent newspaper, dedicated to: (1) Serving the Greater Harrisburg Area with a responsible alternative journalistic voice; and (2) Providing the most complete coverage available anywhere of the trial of the Harrisburg 8." To date, H.I.P. has offered some articles about the Harrisburg 8 defendants and some authored by the defendants themselves. Some articles have examined a defendant's motives for participating in the war-resistance movement. Others have provided a look at the legal maneuverings and the government's mis-handling of the case.

In addition to the moral, personal and legal aspects of the Harrisburg 8 mis-trial, H.I.P. has also provided the promised alternative news voice to its readers. Articles on Nixon's economic plan, the state legislature and a variety of local happening have appeared. A recent issue included both a

revealing story about a Harrisburg drug bust and a report on area hamburger joints. One standing column, "HIP Consumer" is of interest to everyone who buys goods in the area.

Of the "alternative newspaper" role, Zuckerman stated, "In any one newspaper town, the public is at the mercy of one editor or staff, and I feel that Harrisburg has been a one mediocre-newspaper town." He feels also that the PATRIOT-NEWS is guilty of surface journalism and that more digging has to be done in many cases. "I think there are other communities which must be served in Harrisburg. The PATRIOT does little for the Black community, for example."

His outlook for the H.I.P. is, understandably, good. "I think there are enough 'liberal-minded' people in Harrisburg who understand the need and who will appreciate the Harrisburg Independent Press."

You can help. The H.I.P. will continue to provide coverage of the Harrisburg 8 trial, and will provide the alternative news voice only as long as the funds hold out. Your subscription will help this necessary voice to be heard. Go ahead, learn something about Harrisburg—subscribe to H.I.P.

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