

African-American

Perspective

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Wrapping it up. A look back at the last ten months of 2007.

Wrap up time.

Well, The end of 2007 is near. Each year we take stock of our lives and hope for a brighter future. We expect 2008 to be better than 2007. Whether it will or not remains to be seen. The only thing that is known is that it will be different.

The New Year will give Williamsport a new Mayor. Dr. Gabe Campana will assume the reigns of leadership with promises of increased safety and protection. His famous campaign phrase was aimed at criminals, gang-bangers and drug dealers, "On day one, you're done!" An African-American Perspective wishes the new city administration and the other winners in the last election much success in the coming years.

The first issue of An African-American Perspective (March, 2007) asked the question, "Where are the black professionals in Williamsport?" Perhaps that was unfair. Many talented African-Americans in our town quietly go about their lives trying to make a difference. Their good works should be noted and acknowledged.

In issues that followed we wrote about events that took center stage in our consciousness. The Don Imus' insult to black women (April, 2007) brought about a much-needed discussion about the words we use to describe ourselves. (Months later, the NAACP officially buried the N-word.) We also noted the lack of black faces at the TV news stations.

The warmth of May brought us beautiful



Does "An African-American Perspective" provide a much-needed, worthwhile service to the community? Should we continue or should we shut it down and move on? Whatever the outcome, it's been fun creating, producing and disseminating information that can be found nowhere else. (Who would want to write about race problems?)

Wrapping it up. A look back at the last ten months of 2007.

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flowers and the Primary Elections. We encouraged blacks to vote, citing that they made 13% of Williamsport's population. We also reported Williamsport's new NAACP and its public thanks to our Police Officers.

In the June issue we highlighted the efforts of CAPPa and the hard work needed to produce the 2007 Showcase, "Knowledge is Power". Our preliminary research of school performance ratings revealed a National disgrace. Our schools are failing our children.

When most extolled the praises of the nation's founding fathers on the 4th of July, An African-American Perspective considered the hidden history and hypocrisy of American Slavery. We also alerted the public to new legislation in Congress to allow the Justice Department to re-open cold "hate crime" murder cases.

In August, we related the story of Genarlow Wilson, the teen that was sentenced to a mandatory 10-years in prison for having sex with a 15-year old girl. (After 3 years in prison, Genarlow was finally freed in November 2007.) We asked the unlikely question, "Did the North really win the Civil War?" and we reported on CAPPa's gang prevention workshop.

September was a tough time for this publication. Running out of money, we continue to struggle through the darkness. We reported about the proposed Martin Luther King Memorial that will cost 100 million dollars. We also spread the word about the Americorps Volunteer Program and the Sister Study's need for women of color. We also alerted the community about the now infamous Jena 6 case.

The eighth issue (October, 2007) focused on the general election, viral rumors (like the end of black U.S. Postage stamps), the



This newsletter is available online or can be downloaded as a PDF file. The downloaded file will have the layout as designed and will be suitable for printing from your computer.

local NAACP response to the Jena 6 case and a "Stop Hunger" campaign by local churches. And we thanked WPTC's Jazz 88 crew. We couldn't have produced this newsletter without their cool sound.

Last month's issue dealt almost entirely with the myth of black inferiority. Again, we boldly asked about another taboo subject, Race and Intelligence. We visited the Dred Scott Decision and its impact on our culture. We also presented the stories of two black men that rose to prominence despite the odds. Finally, we took note of proposed reading programs in Williamsport.

If you missed any of these issues you can download them, for free, as PDF files. You can also read them online in the archives section of An African-American Perspectives website.

The future of this newsletter is in doubt. Its continuation into 2008 will depend on its readership. If there is no interest then it will die a natural death. If the public wants us to go on they will let us know.

The problem, it seems, is that black people don't believe in themselves. We don't support each other. We lack unity. We lack confidence. We don't believe in our own power.

Reverend Leon H. Sullivan understood the power of the masses. From humble beginnings in his Philadelphia church he created an international company dedicated to help the poor.

The U.S. Census says that there are roughly 4,000 black people in the city of Williamsport. If each black person donated one dollar that would be \$4,000.00 to keep the operation going! If they donated 10 ten dollars that would be a whopping \$40,000.00! (Can you imagine what we could do with tens of thousands of dollars in the bank? We could buy new computers, update the website, integrate video and audio, open an office, hire people, establish journalism scholarships and much, much more.)

Williamsport's black population is too dependent on the white community. We need to be more self-reliant. We need to support black businesses. We need to create an environment where our young people can dream again.

The future is in our hands.

If you would like to make a donation to this publication, mail it to:

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Thank you.

Richard C. James
Editor and Publisher

Rev. Leon H. Sullivan and the incredible OIC phenomenon.

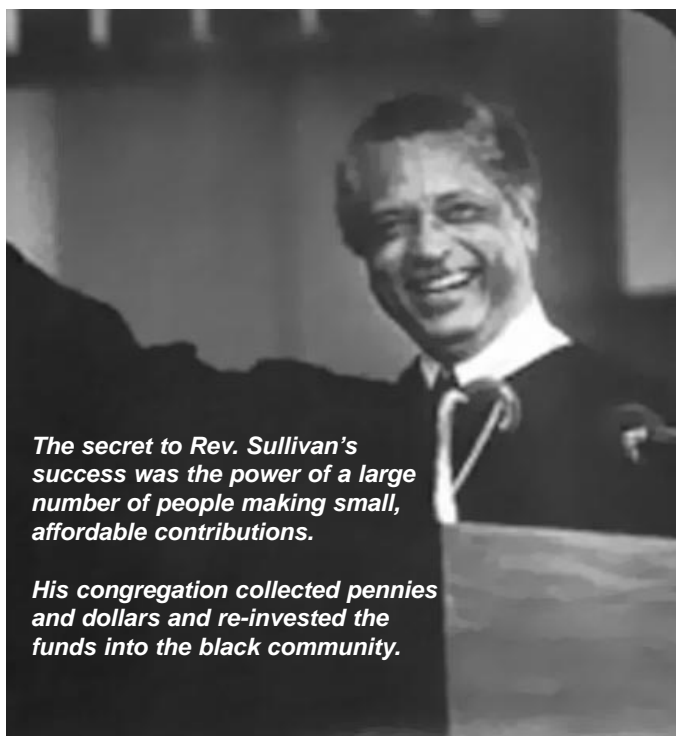
At the age of eight, a boy tried to purchase a Coca-Cola in a drugstore on Capitol Street in Charleston, West Virginia in 1930. The black child was refused service. The proprietor said, "Stand on your feet, boy. You can't sit here." That incident triggered a lifelong commitment to solving racial injustice. That boy grew up to become the famed civil rights activist, Reverend Leon H. Sullivan.

Sullivan attended college on sports scholarships and also worked in a steel mill to pay for his tuition. After college he attended the Union Theological Seminary and served as Adam Clayton Powell's assistant minister at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York city.

In the 1950's Sullivan became minister of the Zion Baptist Church in Philadelphia. By the 1960's the church congregation grew to over 4,000 members.

Sullivan believed the key to social justice and racial equality was jobs. He asked many large Philadelphia businesses to hire blacks but was largely ignored. Sullivan started a boycott of those businesses that did not employ blacks. The boycott was successful.

Getting a job and keeping a job, however, was two separate issues. Sullivan found that blacks needed training to get better job opportunities. Sullivan formed the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) and the



The secret to Rev. Sullivan's success was the power of a large number of people making small, affordable contributions.

His congregation collected pennies and dollars and re-invested the funds into the black community.

Zion Investment Association (ZIA). The first OIC started at an abandoned police station in North Philadelphia. ZIA raised funds to invest in new businesses.

Under Sullivan's leadership, blacks got better paying jobs that helped to stabilize families and reduced welfare rolls. New supermarkets and convenience stores opened in the so-called "high crime areas" of the city. Such success gained national attention and Sullivan's program expanded to cities across the nation. OIC eventually went international and provided job training to poor Africans.

However, South Africa was ruled under an apartheid system. Blacks were not allowed to have better paying jobs. As a recognized international civil rights leader, that also was General Motors' first black board member, Sullivan used his corporate clout to organize a

multinational boycott of South Africa. The boycott, which took several years, was very successful. Eventually, the South African government bowed to the demands of the international community and freed Nelson Mandela from prison. Mandela became South Africa's first black President in 1994.

The Global Sullivan Principles of Corporate Social Responsibility (1977)

1. Nonsegregation of the races in all eating, comfort, and work facilities.
2. Equal and fair employment practices for all employees.
3. Equal pay for all employees doing equal or comparable work for the same period of time.
4. Initiation of and development of training programs that will prepare, in substantial numbers, blacks and other nonwhites for supervisory, administrative, clerical, and technical jobs.
5. Increasing the number of blacks and other nonwhites in management and supervisory positions.
6. Improving the quality of life for blacks and other nonwhites outside the work environment in such areas as housing, transportation, school, recreation, and health facilities.
7. Working to eliminate laws and customs that impede social, economic, and political justice. (Added in 1984.)

Reverend Sullivan died in 2001 at the age of 79.

<http://www.revleonsullivan.org/index.htm>

A Blast from the Past: Influx vs. Originals in Williamsport.

What follows is an essay about black Williamsport. It was posted on the website but not printed in the newsletter until now.

Almost invariably, a discussion of African-American solidarity turns negative. "Black people can't get their act together," is the general consensus.

Negativity looms large in the consciousness of many African-Americans. Rather than expressing a "can-do" attitude, we are bombarded with a thousand reasons why something cannot be done.

The purpose of this newsletter is to bring the African-American community together. I want to see a healing among the original black residents and the "influx" of black newcomers. There is a lot of resentment on both sides. Now is the time to come together.

Both groups have suffered from racial discrimination and injustice. Both groups have known the experience of being locked out of the American mainstream of wealth and prosperity. The blacks from the large cities and the descendants of the black settlers (and black slaves) have common roots of a cruel historical past.

Yet, we continually bicker among ourselves. We classify ourselves as "crabs in a barrel". We denigrate each other. We deny our common-ness. We do not trust each other.

Initially, the native Williamsporters welcomed the newcomers with open arms. But that soon changed. One person described the situation, "Some of the influx crowd messed things up. We need to accept our responsibility in that."

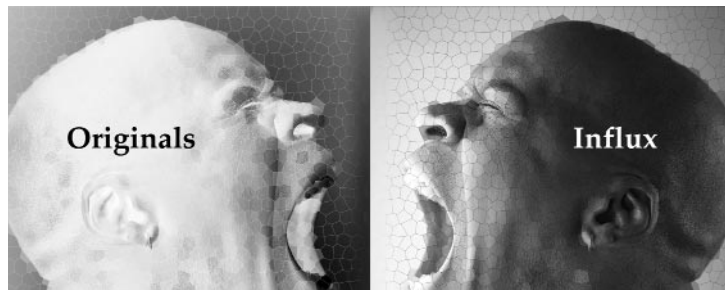
According to some residents the "influx" brought an increase in crime. One black man said, "When I came here many years ago, there was only one murder! Now, we have two or three per year!"

Another black man said, "Hey! I am not buying it! I am an American. I can live anywhere I want. These things were bound to happen. Don't blame me."

Perhaps Williamsport was overdue for a dose of cold, hard reality. Every major city in the nation has been struggling with the affects of poverty and neglect for over 100 years. W.E.B. DuBois in 1899 described how blacks were denied access to jobs in his report, the Philadelphia Negro.

He wrote, "In the Negro's mind, color prejudice in Philadelphia is that widespread feeling of dislike for his blood, which keeps him and his children out of decent employment, from certain public conveniences and amusements, from hiring houses in many sections, and in general, from being recognized as a man."

An historian wrote this about DuBois' work, "It revealed the Negro group as a symptom, not a cause; as a striving, palpitating group, and not an inert, sick body of crime; as a long historic development and not a transient occurrence." This was the first time such a scientific approach to studying social phenomena was undertaken, and as a consequence



DuBois is acknowledged as the father of Social Science."

In order to come together, we must understand our past. We need to recognize the factors that shaped our condition. We must acknowledge the harm that was done and our complicity in it. The impoverished black ghetto of Philadelphia is the result of a social, political and economic exclusion by a white power structure. Blacks in Philadelphia did not make any substantial social progress because they were restricted from doing so.

In Williamsport, blacks were also expected to mind their place. They lived in the "Browntown" section of Williamsport. Recently a friend described what life was like for a black teen in the 1970's. "We better had not crossed Hepburn Street or else we got our butts beat!" he said.

In many ways, Central Pennsylvania reminds me of Alabama, circa 1965. Those attitudes that DuBois complained about in 1899 still exist today.

It is important for African-Americans to come together in a spirit of brotherhood. We need recognize that we are in the same boat. Our dark skin tones unite us. Let the healing begin. We can do it!

Count the Black faces on TV news. How many do you see?

This reprinted article from Volume 1, Number 2 of An African-American Perspective Newsletter has been updated:

Let's talk about local TV news. In Williamsport, there are only three daily news stations that serve our community. All of them are located in the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton area.

Williamsport does not have a TV station of its own. Our community must depend on news broadcasts that are primarily produced and written for the Wilkes-Barre and Scranton markets.

WNEP, the ratings leader is owned by the New York Times Company. WBRE and WYOU are both owned by Nextar, a Texas company.

I did a little researching on the Internet and I found that each station has its own website that lists the bios of their on-air talent. WBRE and WYOU have

a combined list of 28 on-air personalities. WBRE has one black female and one hispanic female listed. WBRE is a NBC news affiliate and WYOU is a CBS affiliate. (Both network news organizations air the Don Imus radio/TV show.)

WNEP (an ABC affiliate) is different. Of the 32 on-air personalities, three are non-white (Jill Garrett, Sherman Burdette and Rosa Yum).

To sum up, of the 60 people that report the news to us, only four reporters are "individuals of color". Three work for WNEP and one for WBRE. (Hispanics can be considered white.)

Please keep in mind there are many other people that contribute to a news show. The exact racial percentages of these employees are not available to

me. But each year during the Christmas holidays the news stations show us the "off-air" people that work so hard to bring us the news. **These electronic Christmas cards reveal that the behind-the-scene staffs are all white!** I am sure the stations will do it again this year. So, this Christmas, count the number of dark skinned faces employed by the news stations. In years past, I didn't see any.

Can young black high school students realistically expect to get a TV job in the Williamsport area? Are blacks locked out of high paying jobs in North Central Pennsylvania?

(As of November 29, 2007 things have gotten worst. According to the stations' websites, Jill Garrett and Sherman Burdette are the only two black "on-air" faces on local TV news.)

Get involved. Help yourself. Support these Organizations.



Is your food killing you? Eat healthy, it's not that hard.



Is our food safe to eat? Why not start you own garden? Become a vegetarian. (Be sure to check with your doctor before making any changes to your diet.)

Our society is out of whack. Good wholesome food is hard to find. Today, everything is pre-packaged and over processed. Our food is tainted with chemicals, high sodium and HFCS (High Fructose Corn Syrup). In the past year meats and produce have been recalled. Is our food safe to eat?

We are suffering from Obesity, Diabetes and High Blood Pressure. We laugh it off. We ignore the warning signals. We put try to put a positive spin on it. (Some black women say that they are not fat, they call themselves "thick". Studies have shown that black women put on more weight faster than white women.)

Blacks have been trying to make "lemonade from life's lemons" for centuries. We made "Soul Food" a delicacy from the slave-master's unwanted leftovers. Many a black child was raised on government supplied cheese and flour. During slavery times having meat to eat was a cause to celebrate.

However, there is a new movement in the black community; vegetarianism. Today, many African-Americans are turning away



Ever notice how TV commercials for fast food restaurants are aimed at the black community?

from beef, pork and chicken to eat vegetable only meals. For one thing vegetarian diets are less expensive.

There are six categories of anti-meat eaters; Fruitarians, Lacto-ovo-vegetarian, Lacto-vegetarian, Ovo-vegetarian, Raw or live foodist and Vegans. Don't get hung up on the names. Just be sure a vegetarian diet has the proper nutrients for health such as Vitamin B12, Iron, Calcium and Protein.

Several celebrities have sworn off meat. According to the website Black Vegetarians.com, Ben Carson, neurosurgeon

at John Hopkins University; Angela Bassett, actress; Seal, singer; Common, rap artist; Mumia Abu Jamal, imprisoned journalist and convicted cop killer are all vegetarians.

And the website AfricanAmericans.com says this about comedian and civil rights activist Dick Gregory, "In 2001, Gregory announced to the world that he had been diagnosed with a rare form of Cancer. He refused traditional medical treatment chemotherapy and with the assistance of some of the finest minds in alternative medicine, put together a regimen of a variety of diet, vitamins, exercise, and modern devices not even known to the public, which ultimately resulted in his reversing the trend of the Cancer to the point where today he is nearly 85% free of it, and getting better every day."

Dick Gregory has been a vegetarian for several years.

<http://www.unc.edu/news/archives/jun02/mctigue053102.htm>
<http://www.blackvegetarians.org/features/famousveg.htm>
<http://www.blackvegetarians.org/transition/definitions.htm>
<http://www.africanamericans.com/DickGregory.htm>

INNER EXPRESSIONS

This page is dedicated to the inner spirit that dwells within us all. Life is art, Art is life. Express yourself! Share the Joy...



Ruby Green Singing (1928)
by James Chapin (1887-1975)
the Norton Museum, West Palm Beach, Florida

Lift every voice and sing.

Lift every voice and sing, till earth and Heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise, high as the listening skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
Let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod, bitter the chastening rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat, have not our weary feet,
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered,
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered;
Out from the gloomy past, till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,
Thou Who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou Who hast by Thy might, led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee.
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee.
Shadowed beneath Thy hand, may we forever stand, True to our God,
true to our native land.

Lyrics by James Weldon Johnson. - 1900
Music by J. Rosamond Johnson (his brother)

To hear the song online go to:
<http://www.npr.org/programs/pt/features/bhm2003.html>

CLIP AND SAVE. KEEP HANDY IN YOUR PURSE OR WALLET.



Looking to the future...

Here's our wish list for the coming year:

- The end to black-on-black violence. The shootings, the drug dealing, the stealing must stop. If we are to move ahead we must come together and solve these problems.
- More black businesses in Williamsport. Here's an idea: let's start an African-American /Underground Railroad museum and school. Dr. Mamie Diggs has done much of the groundwork already. The museum-school would offer a course on what it was like to be a slave on the run in the 1850's. A weekend camp would simulate the hardships that escaping slaves endured. It would make a good tourist attraction and provide much needed jobs in our area.
- To have all the black churches unite in solidarity. Our black churches could offer college scholarships to qualified black youth. This work has already been done on a limited basis, the program could easily be expanded to include more students.
- To start black book clubs. If the adults are reading, the children will read. We can form groups and talk about books by black authors. (Code of the Street would be an excellent book to start the whole thing rolling.
- To support CAPP and the NAACP.
- To see highly trained black professionals in positions of management. Black income levels need to be raised. We need more bankers, doctors, real estate agents, lawyers, financial advisors, college professors, politicians, police officers and other administrative positions for blacks.
- Better performance of black children in our school system. The drop out rate for young black males must be reduced significantly.
- To give hope to our children for a bright future.



ATTENTION!

African-American Perspective is looking for volunteers. We need writers, artists, poets, etc., anyone who wants to make a positive difference in our community. No one will be excluded, but we are interested in engaging and showcasing the talents of African-American youth.

Write a brief description of yourself with contact information and send it to:

RCJamesDesign/African-American Perspective
P.O. Box 1181, Williamsport, Pa. 17703