

EDITORIAL/OPINION



Voluntary integration underscores choice

By Herb L. Cawthorne

Strong leader needed

The State Human Resource Bureau is seeking a manager for the Albina Human Resource Center, a position that is of the utmost importance to this community.

The center director not only coordinates the activities of several state and county agencies housed in the building, but manages emergency services. He/she also should influence the policies and procedures of the various agencies and their relationship to the community.

The person who is selected for this position should be Black and live in the community. He should have a history of involvement in community agencies and organizations -- both those with governmental ties and those formed by community people to address their needs. He should have been seen, known and respected by the people living in this community -- those who will need services supplied by the center as well as those who will be depended upon to support the center in the community.

He should be someone who has a proven record of work with community based boards. He should have a demonstrated ability to work within the state system -- interpreting, guiding and explaining state guidelines and objectives. He should have the ability to organize community support for the center and for its volunteer programs.

The new director must have a personal knowledge of the needs of the community, the problems peculiar to Albina, the culture and the expectations of the residents. He must also have the training and experience in the social services field to turn these understandings into concrete programs. He must have the strength of character to stand up for those who need an advocate or a protector, and the energy and enthusiasm to enable him to endure the disappointments and the criticism.

If this person can be found -- and we know he can -- the Albina Human Resource Center can rise to a new level of service.

Move winter games

Four years ago many Americans were upset about a boycott of the Olympic Games by many African nations, saying the games should be above politics. Now many of the same Americans, including our President, are calling for the removal of the games from the Soviet Union.

These same Americans should be calling for the removal of the Winter Olympics from the United States, for the housing of visiting athletics in a prison is an insult to the spirit of the Olympics.

Olympic Village, near Lake Placid, New York, will become a youth prison for the Federal Bureau of Prisons after the Olympics are completed. Funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, the \$22 million project will become a medium-security prison for 500 youthful offenders -- mostly non-white between the ages of 18 and 25.

The prison, 300 miles from the Eastern cities from which it will draw inmates, ignores the government's own policy that prisons be located in or near metropolitan areas so family and community ties can be retained.

Contrary to other nations in the western world, which are steadily decreasing their prison populations, the U.S. is building prisons at a rapid pace. Olympic Prison is one of an estimated 1,000 federal prisons that will be built in the next five years, housing an additional 300,000 prisoners at a cost of \$25 million.

The Olympic Village -- with bars over the small windows, solid doors with little peepholes and firm, heavy locks, surrounded by a double cyclone fence -- should not house young athletes who come together to enjoy the sharing of different cultures and races as well as the spirit of competition.

It is an insult to the athletes and to the nations they represent.

Black children can learn in all-Black schools... But Black leaders must work to provide alternatives that make a choice, particularly for poor parents, a viable one. And here, litigation is no substitute for the hard, unglamorous political education that is essential in building effective public schools wherever they are found. (Derrick Bell "Learning from the Brown Experience" The Black Scholar, September/October)

In recent weeks, the messages from the Black community which I have heard have been mixed. Some, in the tradition of Thurgood Marshall, say integration is essential for quality education and it must be mandated by the Board of Education. Required busing is absolutely necessary.

Indeed, there are those who feel quite comfortable with the present structure of desegregation in Portland, arguing that the process of integration in a society soaked with racism is a burden Blacks alone must bear since the great majority of whites will not participate.

Some say integration is not highly valued if it must be achieved against the stiff resistance of the white community and that seeking it under such circumstances only contributes to the sense of inferiority often fostered in the Black psyche.

Yet others have urged that self-determination is far more important for the Black race than is integration. While expressing a general distaste for integration, they say there is an undeniable pressing need for Black parents to maintain the right to insure a strong influence on the values imparted to their children.

The conflicting messages are not signs of confusion. They reflect the

different schools in 1977. This was not voluntary! ranging and changing attitudes that attend the subjects of desegregation. Indeed, no matter what one's perspective, the experience of Brown vs. Board of Education has rendered many lessons. One of the foremost is reflected in the realization of many Black parents that "...equal education opportunity is not simply racial composition of schools," as Robert G. Newby wrote in a recent issue of The Black Scholar. He asserted that "Therefore, the quality of education rather than the racial composition of the schools is of critical importance."

Given the changing of attitudes and a firm realization that quality is far more critical than racial numbers, I have come to believe that a voluntary desegregation program is best suited to present needs. When I say "voluntary," that's exactly what I mean.

In the past, the Board of Education instituted policies that required Black parents to participate in the administrative transfer program. And the Board condoned the administration of the program which sent Black children in small numbers to more than 50 schools throughout the city.

The Community Coalition for School Integration in November 1978 reported, "The mandatory elimination of grade levels in all of the elementary schools, except Boise, has not been carried out in any other community in the district. Students leaving the Black community for the purpose of school desegregation have been scattered and isolated throughout the whole school district."

For illustration, Sabin grades 6, 7, and 8 were eliminated in the fall of 1976 -- 201 students were sent to 15 schools. The 7th grade was eliminated at Woodlawn in 1977, and that year 176 students were sent to 18 schools. Each year, more students were sent to more schools. Until, as the ultimate example, 451 students from King were sent to 39

different schools in 1977. This was not voluntary!

I believe the voluntary program now under discussion is appropriate given the multitude of opinions in the Black community. Under a truly voluntary program, those who have transferred can come back to their neighborhood school. Boundary changes, space adjustments and capital construction will insure this. Those who do not want to transfer out of their neighborhood school will not have to do so. The Board of Education will not eliminate scattering that exists at present; but parents can reduce it or eliminate it by exercising their right to select how they will participate.

No parent will be required to transfer a child. Thus, in making a choice, a parent can follow his or her belief as regards integration. This seems far better than trying to eliminate scattering, which is detrimental, by mandatorily pulling all the children back and changing all the schools to accommodate mandatory busing for racial balance.

Educational improvements must be the heart and soul of any new efforts. This is wise, for as Derrick Bell has written, "Desegregation plans that emphasize upgrading of teaching standards and techniques at schools where Black children attend are gaining judicial support in Detroit, Boston, and elsewhere."

Portland's Black community does not need to gain "judicial support" -- to insist that standards of excellence be devised and imparted to parents, students, teachers, and administrators working within our schools. No child should be forced to transfer from a neighborhood school because the quality of opportunity is less there than it is at a school outside the neighborhood. If a child is transferred, it should be to obtain special instruction in a unique program that suits well the aspirations of that particular child.

This is distinctly different that what has gone on before.



Rhodesia to Zimbabwe: The rocky road

By N. Fungai Kumbula

Fifteen weeks of sometimes up and sometimes down negotiations at Lancaster House culminated in the signing of a peace agreement in late December ending the bitter seven year war of liberation in Zimbabwe. When the negotiations started in early September, the opposing sides were so far apart that an agreement did not seem at all possible. However, the grim realities of the war prodded some of the same African countries that had prevailed on Britain to back away from her original course which was to recognize the illegal Muzorewa regime and the hell with everything else, to soften their position somewhat.

So, as discussed last week, the front line states of Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia which offered sanctuary or other related support to the Patriotic Front guerrillas leaned on the PF to be more flexible in their demands. As a result of this pressure, the agreement finally signed was a lot less than the Africans had been demanding. The most contentious issue had been the veto power that Muzorewa had allowed the whites to retain in the so-called internal agreement. Another equally burning issue was involved "compensation" to those whites whose land were to be expropriated under an independent

Zimbabwe's land reappropriation plan.

Though the new agreement does address both questions as well as control of the army, police force and civil service, it is little different than the old. For one thing, the whites still are allowed 20 seats in a 100 seat Senate -- that's still 20% representation even though they constitute less than 3% of the population. Though theoretically this 20% no longer has veto power, whites still exercise a disproportionate clout because any constitutional changes will require a unanimous consent. This is the only constitution I know of with such an absurd stipulation.

The question of "compensation" for white owned land was sidestepped. Instead, Britain, the U.S. and several other European economic community members agreed to set up a Zimbabwe development fund and it is money from this fund that will be used to buy this land from the whites and pass it on to the government of Zimbabwe. The PF had logically argued that, since the land was stolen in the first place, there was no need to compensate the thieves.

The Lancaster House agreement also calls for the holding of elections from February 27 through the 29th to elect a majority Black government for Zimbabwe. During the

abortive March elections the PF boycotted the elections because the constitution on which they were based was so unfair. This time the PF will contest the elections which also would be supervised by a combined British-Commonwealth peace-keeping force. A cease-fire agreement which was also signed as part of the Lancaster agreement stipulated that this peace-keeping force would also be responsible for keeping the former combatants the PF guerrillas and the Rhodesian army apart.

Rhodesia also reverted to colonial status and the British appointed a Lord Soames to be the all powerful governor. Though he was supposed to have been running Rhodesia only with the help of the Commonwealth peace-keeping force while both the Rhodesian army and the guerrillas were confined to camps, lately he has been relying very heavily on the Rhodesian army to "track down renegade guerrillas."

* With the whites guaranteed 20 seats, it means the Africans will be contesting only 80 seats out of the 100 total. Also given that the Africans vote will be split at least six ways -- there are six Black candidates running -- no Black can come up with a majority. A majority would mean at least 51 seats.

NEXT: Is there life after the elections?

We're entering one of those years that come along every decade or so in which decisions are made that will affect the course of the future.

One such decision, of course, will be made by the electorate -- choosing a President.

Both parties are embroiled in heated primary campaigns, a sure sign that this election won't be a routine one. The stakes are big. America's position of the world leadership, a faltering economy, future energy policies, and the course of minority aspirations to equality are all in the balance.

Black people will be the targets of vote-hunting politicians searching for support of a key group that holds the balance of electoral power in many important states.

Carter partisans are pointing to the Administration's generally good record on minority -- oriented issues, while glossing over some unfilled promises. Kennedy and Brown backers are saying they can and will do more.

On the other side of the political fence, Republicans are still trying to decide how far to go to attract Blacks to their banner. In the past, their national candidates have generally ignored Blacks. But all too often Democrats have just taken Black voters for granted. So the field is wide open for a real scramble for the crucial Black vote.

Thus, 1980 will find candidates coming to America's ghettos in search of support. That support

Black votes shouldn't slide silently into anyone's hip pocket.

Black bargaining power can be maximized by two strategies. First, Black leadership at all levels and in all fields, should be demanding concrete, ironclad commitments to key elements of the Black agenda. It is no longer enough for candidates to make promises in private. They've got to make them out front in full public view, and thus shift the center of gravity of national debate away from national indifference to minority needs.

A second, perhaps more important strategy, is to sharply boost Black registration. In 1976, when Black voters elected a President, less than half actually went to the polls. Unless that figure is increased, politicians will continue to believe that the Black vote is not central to their campaign strategy.

Almost as important for Black people in 1980, will be the census. Past census figures grossly undercounted the true number of Black people in the population. The result has been to shortchange Blacks and the cities they live in, since most formulas for federal aid are based on census -- derived population figures.

Those census figures also are used in reapportioning legislative districts, from Congress on down to local councils. That means some Congressional seats will be lost in areas where Blacks predominate, as

Black votes may be diluted by the addition of suburban areas to existing urban districts.

That is the likely outcome if the census undercounts Black urban populations. So it is in minority interests to make sure the Census Bureau gets an accurate Black and Hispanic count, and every minority person has a stake in being counted.

Economic issues are bound to dominate 1980. Inflation continues to hit the poor hardest and the OPEC price -- gouging will inflict greater damage on the economy. By late 1979 there were wholesale layoffs in key manufacturing industries that employ large numbers of minorities.

So a Black community that never recovered from the last recession will be hit by a new one. That's sure to lead to an increased flow of emergency aid programs, but such job creation is not substitute for mainstream employment. And even stop-gap programs will be bitterly fought by those who think a balanced budget is more important than avoidance of harsh suffering for working people.

How the nation deals with its economic problems in 1980 could set the pattern for the decades's economy. How the census operates in 1980 could determine Black political and economic prospects for the decade. Who the nation chooses as its President in 1980 could determine America's future.

This is a year of high stakes.

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