

U.S. wages war on Black women

Part II
By Dr. Manning Marable

The oppression of Black women workers can be illustrated in other ways, beyond the limitations of the poverty line. For example, the median income of a Black family with both husband and wife in the workforce is \$23,957. For Black married couples with only the husband in the work force, the median income is \$17,477. For Black female householders where no husband or male is present in the home, the median family income is only \$11,518. This figure is lower than that for white female household heads (\$15,421) and for Hispanic women (\$13,330). The median income for Black females over the age of 14, who work full time, regardless of marital status, is \$9793. In the Southern states, the income figure is only \$8473.

There has been a great deal of rhetoric within Black politics about the impoverishment of the Black male at the expense of the Black female. Supposedly, sisters took jobs away from Black men because they were "less threatening" to the system of white male domination. This line of argument suggested that Black women, more than males, were the chief beneficiaries of affirmative action programs and administrative posts within the private sector. When one studies the facts, however, one derives a radically different picture.

First, it is important to isolate the sectors of Black society who are in the upper income levels. According to 1979 Census statistics, there were 9,297,000 white families heads or householders who earned \$35,000 or more annually. In sharp contrast, only 375,000 Black family heads made \$35,000 or more. That group amounts to less than 5 percent of all Black family households - (.0046 percent). 61,000 Black family



households earned more than \$50,000 annually, less than three-fourths of one percent (.00073) of all Black family households. Only 14,000 Black families earned over \$75,000 annually.

Within these upper income groups, Black women are severely underrepresented, to say the least. Four thousand Black men and

548,000 white men earned at least \$75,000 in 1979. Less than 500 Black women earned that figure. 14,000 Black men earned \$50,000 - \$75,000. Only 2,000 Black women were in this category. 46,000 Black men received \$35,000 - \$50,000 income. Only 6,000 Black women earned salaries in this range. 68,000 Black males received salaries of \$30,000 - \$35,000 in 1979. About 8,000 Black women had this income. In brief, the illusion that sisters are achieving at the expense of Black men is not only false, it is a complete reversal of the oppressive conditions for Black women at every level of the economy.

Reagan's proposals for food

stamps would have a devastating impact upon poor Black women. To understand this fully, however, we must briefly review the history of the program, what it does, who it helps, and why it may be destroyed.

The food stamp program was enacted into law almost twenty years ago, and was designed primarily to use up surplus farm products. There were only 425,000 people enrolled in the program in 1964, at a cost of \$30 million annually. As late as 1969, only 2.9 million persons were receiving food stamps. It was during the Nixon and Ford Administrations, ironically enough, that the Food Stamps program began to grow rapidly. By 1980, there were over 22 million Americans on food stamps.

We hear a lot of criticism about food stamp recipients. Ronald Reagan, Jesse Helms and other right-wing politicians tell white Americans that the program benefits students, the lazy and professional rip-off artists. The realities behind the reactionary rhetoric are somewhat different.

The average food stamp family has an annual income of \$3,900. About 90 percent of all food stamp recipients are below the poverty line, which for a family of four is \$7,450 per year. Over half have no tangible assets. 54 percent, or over 11.5 million recipients of food stamps are children. Almost 80 percent are unable to work because of age, disabilities, or other related reasons. Only 14 percent are adults who are able-bodied and are able to work. Less than 1 percent are college or graduate students.

The Reagan Administration's budget includes welfare cuts for pregnant women. According to the Department of Health, and Human Services, the new legislation proposes that states not give welfare to any pregnant women with no other children, except in the last three months of pregnancy. Thirty-four states are now currently making such payments. Here again, we see that the Reagan budget's assault takes a more aggressive posture against the material interests of women, and particularly against sisters. The war against Black women continues.

Pacific Power Citizen of the Week



Christine Poole is Media Coordinator of Elementary Library Services for the Portland Public School District, where she supervises librarians and library aides and library book selection for elementary and middle schools.

Ms. Poole came to Portland, which she describes as a 'beautiful city', six years ago. Born in California, she earned a BA in Elementary Education in Stockton and a MA in Library Science at the University of Oregon. She taught for 12 years.

Her most recent assignment prior to taking her present position last August, was as librarian at Cleveland High School.

Ms. Poole is a member of the Oregon Education Media Association, Oregon Education Association, and is past president of the Portland Association of School Librarians.

She is a member of Delta Sigma Theta, the Urban League and the NAACP. Her hobbies include sewing and yard work.

Mrs. Poole has gained the respect of students and staff alike in her pursuit of excellence.

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Latch-Key care available

The YMCA of Columbia Willamette's "Latch Key," a child care program which offers safe, supervised day care, will operate in five centers in the Portland area this summer.

"We provide supervised child care which has an in-depth impact on the growth of children and their families," said Sharon Breniser, executive director of the Latch Key program.

Summer locations include Lincoln park School, Laurelhurst School, Creston School, Merely Davies School and Knott School. Center hours during the summer are from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday at all centers except Merely Davies; it opens at 6:30 a.m.

The YMCA Latch Key program is offering an "Early Bird Special" to parents who register by mail before June 12. The regular \$5 non-refundable deposit will be waived for those who send \$10, applicable to the first week's day care, with their registration form.

Cost for all-day child care is \$40 per week for one child, or \$70 per week for two children. Ms. Breniser said. Three children may be registered for \$95 per week. Fee includes a morning and afternoon snack.

Parents may register youngsters in the program on Latch Key Sign-Up day, June 12, at each center. For more information, call the YMCA Latch Key program, 223-9622.

NAACP Youth plan seminar

The Vancouver NAACP Youth Council, will hold a Family Seminar on May 30th at Pacific First Federal Savings and Loans, Community Room, 915 Broadway, Vancouver, Washington.

The seminar will begin at 10:00 a.m., with the opening meeting and a video tape, "Not By The Sword" on NAACP history. The following meeting will discuss the history of Blacks and the NAACP in Vancouver.

The additional morning workshops will be on youth council

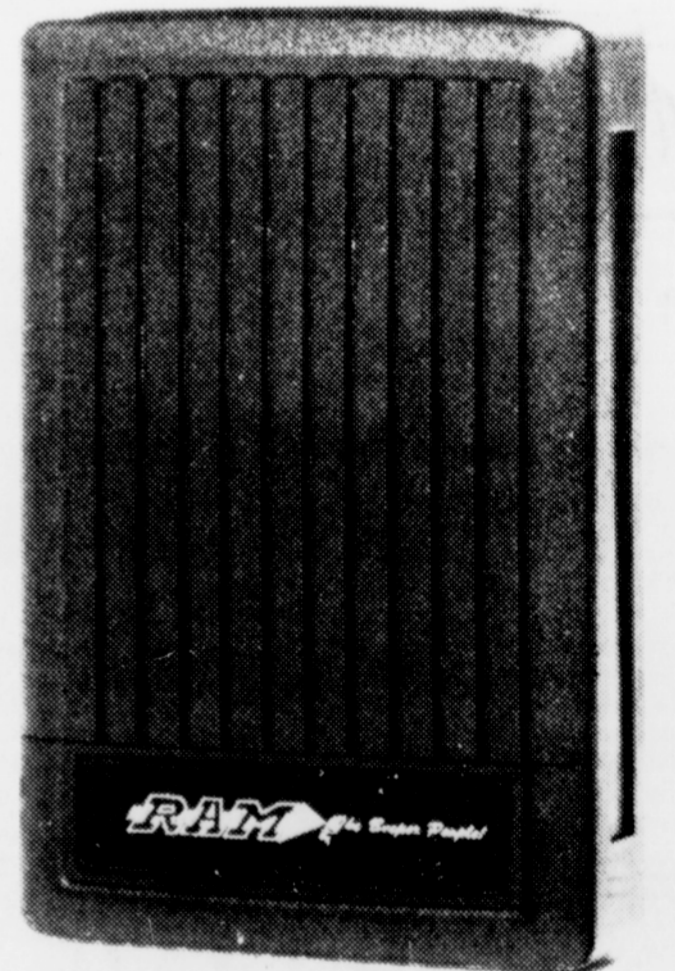
organization and program.

Shirley Hamilton will discuss the 1954 Supreme Court Decision and the current education situation.

Afternoon discussions will be on the role of the Black Church and the NAACP program for the 1980s.

Shelia Anderson, Youth Council President, and Valree Joshua, NAACP Branch President, urge the public to attend the seminar. Registration, including lunch, is \$2.50 for youth and \$3.50 for adults.

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