

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Portland schools flunk parity test

There is something wrong with a school system that does not sound an alarm when a substantial number of its students have historically and consistently scored one to three grades below the district's average.

This is a situation we are faced with in the Portland Public Schools as Black children start another year of academic disappointment.

When we ask why, school officials parrot the "blame the victim" excuse as Black families become another scapegoat for an ineffective lesson plan. But independent observers point to the correlation between teacher expectations and student achievement.

The classroom is the major stimuli for the learning experience and the rapport and relationship a teacher has with students can compensate for the deficiencies in the educational system. But, in Portland this is not happening. When a community of schools, the Early Childhood Education Centers, continue to perform poorly, a challenge for changes has to be raised to prevent the growing acceptance of this academic discrepancy.

Who is accountable and how to you bring about parity? Parents, churches, community leaders and district officials should seek an answer to those questions.

The Black community can ill afford another generation to become educationally crippled adults. Granted, the home and environment are factors but the attitude of the school and its administrators are defensive rather than providing an offensive to correct this problem.

Other Portland Public School disproportions such as with the discipline rate, Blacks in Special Education and those receiving modified diplomas could be reduced if this achievement disproportion was addressed in a meaningful way. Instead, administrators and teachers are quick to

write excuses for themselves on the issue of Black children performing below the district average.

Maybe Black children are not learning because they are not being challenged. They are faced with an irrelevant curriculum and a frozen lesson plan, and ambivalent attitudes from the teachers based on low expectations.

There are enough case studies and data compiled to dismiss the notion that Black and low-income students cannot learn. When the Department of Education's "Nation at Risk" report proved the educational system was failing white middle class students, a nationwide educational S.O.S. was called. Analysis never indicated the families of middle class America for the low achievement. It was the system.

When educators are reminded that Black students score grades behind their white classmates, the child's family, environment and even the child is blamed as they dismiss themselves from accountability.

But accountability must come and it's time to hold the district, its administrators and teachers responsible. Parents and the community should demand a district-wide, school based and individual student plan to bring their children up to grade level.

If these low achievement scores become status quo (and it seems that it has) the school district will graduate a generation of young adults who received no significant education. They will enter the labor force with little or no apparent skills.

For the amount we have invested in the school district, maybe Black and low-income families should request a refund from the district. Certainly, if PPS were a private business, it could not exist with the record of performance it now has.



The church, the state, and poverty

Along the Color Line by Dr. Manning Marable

The two most critical weaknesses of the Catholic bishops' recent economic statement are a failure to explore the historical relationship between Western capitalism as a social system and organized religion, and the many connections between racism and capitalism. The Catholic Church historically tried to live up to its Christian ideals, but frequently capitulated to systems of human exploitation. Catholic theologians at the dawn of capitalism provided the intellectual rationale for justifying slavery and economic exploitation. Saint Thomas Aquinas argued that slavery was an essential aspect of life, given the limited physical and mental capacities of various groups of human beings. Yet both masters and servants were bound as "slaves" to Christ, rendering a spiritual equality between all people. As historian David Brion Davis asserts, Christianity recognized "the grievances and longings of slaves, but sublimated them into another realm of time and space. Any man might become truly free, but only by becoming an unconditional slave to the only true Master. The lowliest slave could look forward to emancipation, but only in another life." the compromise between spiritual equalitarianism and material inequality permitted Christianity to coexist with capitalist civilizations based on slavery and institutional racism.

In the United States, the major political compromise of the Catholic hierarchy was on the question of race. NAACP leader W. E. B. DuBois criticized the morally ambiguous posture of the Church, and for more than half a century urged it to reconcile its moral vision with the real world con-

ditions of Blacks under Jim Crow. Challenged by a Southern Catholic priest who attacked his "hostility to Catholics" in 1925, Dr. DuBois replied that the Church had stood "for color separation and discrimination to a degree equalled by no church in America." Catholic high schools "rigidly excluded Negroes and refused to educate black priests." The Church's race "haters clothed in its episcopal robes" had done "to black Americans in segregation and exclusion from opportunity all that the Ku Klux Klan ever asked." In following years, the Catholic Church became more racially integrated, but many of its theologians and leaders never really comprehended the roots of racism within American capitalism, nor did they link Third World exploitation and systems of racial injustice such as apartheid with the expansion of multinational corporations. They viewed racism as a problem of human relations, not as a social function of economic inequality and the uneven distribution of wealth.

The decisive turning points in Catholic social theory on socioeconomic issues came with Vatican Council II and the birth of "liberation Theology" in the 1960s. Pope John XXIII's "Pacem in terris," issued in 1963, declared that "food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care," just wages and social security were fundamental human rights which must be extended to all. Pope Paul VI's 1967 encyclical "Populorum Progressio" called for the improvement of socioeconomic conditions in the Third World, and criticized Western banks and governments for contributing to world poverty and underdevelopment. Pope

John Paul II has expressed views even further to the left. two months ago in Canada the Pope declared that "the needs of the poor must take priority over the desires of the rich, and the rights of workers over the maximization of profits." A restructured world economic order must place "human needs before financial gain," and those who would call themselves Christians must fight "the temptation of responding only to the forces of the marketplace."

The religious struggle to realize social equality within the U. S. — which draws the necessary correlations between racism and economic exploitation — is best represented by the statements of Black Catholics. The nation's ten Black Roman Catholic bishops issued their own pastoral letter last month, "What We Have Seen and Heard," which attacks racism and socioeconomic injustice. In the tradition of DuBois, they observe: "For many historical reasons, the Black man has been forced to bear the crushing blows of racial hate and economic repression. The Black man has been too often barred from access to decent employment (and) too often stripped of his dignity." The Black bishops understand what Jerry Falwell and others do not — "racism remains the major impediment to evangelization within our community." The struggle for a morally just society demands the abolition of racial and economic oppression.

Dr. Manning Marable teaches political sociology at Colgate University, Hamilton, New York. "Along the Color Line" appears in over 140 newspapers internationally.

Street Beat

by Lanita Duke and Richard Brown

With President Reagan leading the discussion on what to cut out of the Federal budget, the Street Beat team asked, "What programs or project would you like to see cut from the Federal budget?"



Lonnie Henderson
State Worker

"I would hate to see cuts in Social Security and Human Services. I think we should start giving some resources back and cut the military budget."



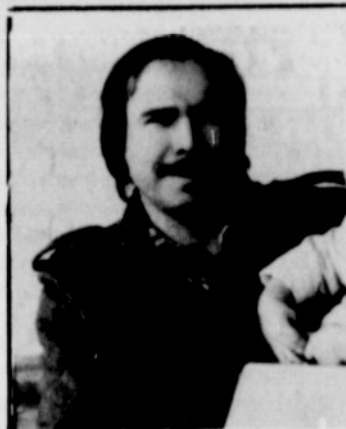
Greg Crittenden
Machine Operator

"If they are going to cut anything, they should cut our taxes. And I would like to see more programs to aid Black people."



Clevonne Jackson
Student

"I would like assurances for the elderly that they will suffer no more cuts. I think they should give services back to those that lost in 1980. They should cut back our arms build-up."



Dennis Law
Student

"I think we need to keep up competitively with the Soviet Union, so I would not say cut defense. Also, I hope they will not touch Human Resources."



LeRee Brossieu
Student

"I think we are paying far too much for military hardware. Let's cut some from defense and put it into Social Security."



Dave Clark
Purchasing Agent

"I would like to see the defense budget cut. We spend far too much on war."

Letters to the Editor

Boycott TV

To the Editor,

It should not be too much, just once every 30 years or so, to ask for an enlightened Black image. I keep hoping one day to turn on the television and find a Black professor, lawyer, or somebody who represents himself intelligently. Just anything other than wisecracking maids and unintelligent, unattractive second men.

But apparently white Americans still are comfortable only with Black people who make them laugh, so we continue to embrace only unintelligent, comedic Black images.

Black people, especially Black youth, need to see Black people portrayed in positive self-respecting roles, instead of the classic bad guy, go-for, and unpaid informant. There is little balance on television to show the difference. There is Florence the maid, Nell Carter the maid, and now there is Mr. T telling People Magazine "it takes a smart man to play dumb."

Right now, Mr. T. is the most visible Black man in America. Dressed like an idiot, gaudy gold chains with short bursts of semi-speech, Mr. T. is half-man, half-animal who looks like a slave and operates on intimidation.

It would be nice to think that Americans are sophisticated enough to look at Mr. T. and Nell Carter and see that they're just actors playing a part for money and that the directors want them to look and act that way. The danger is, however, that too many people think these characters are somewhat reflective of Black America.

These kinds of characters subliminally affect the way Blacks see themselves and directly affect the way white people view Black people in general.

Make no mistake about it, movies and television programs have a direct psychological and sociological impact on societies that is frightening. They set tones in morality and dress for millions of people throughout the world. And I know for a fact that the existence of most of the racial discrimination in this country is a direct result of the population having continuously viewed the Black man as a

foot-shuffling idiot on American television and film.

Americans must not be ready to accept a handsome Black economist wearing suit and tie, walking down Wall Street speaking intelligently. Maybe that's too threatening?

Frankly, I'm appalled that the networks would let this kind of racial discrimination go on for so long. For them to keep up nonsense is ridiculous and for us to watch is even worse. It has been conclusively proven that a huge percentage of television watchers and movie-goers are Black. With that in mind, Black Americans should not settle for the Black shows and characters they're given to watch. Instead, networks should be written and televisions turned off. Until the networks and producers place Black actors in roles that truly reflect Black America, Americans, especially Black Americans should not watch, but boycott, television.

And, of course, pity the fools.

MARK GRICE

Lover blues

To the Editor,

What is happening to us?

I am deeply concerned about what I see as an attitude that is insidiously creeping upon this Black generation. Black men and women not communicating. Black marriages not working. The Black man-white woman syndrome. Rampant infidelity. To each his own—no more caring or concern for each other.

Even though there has been much emphasis placed on the role of communication in relationships, the problem to me seems even deeper than that. It seems as though a vicious cycle has set in; I can't relate to too many of my brothers and they can't relate to me anymore. At least in the 60's and 70's I could talk to my Black brothers and rap about the revolution, our feelings, ambitions and fears, and we all listened to each other.

Now I see that stereotypes have developed among our own people about each other that feel very, very wrong somehow. From my Black brothers, now, I sense apathy, lack of trust,

inability to deal with, cope with, handle Black women; they are a "nuisance", "too much hassle", "complain too much", "too moody", "don't respect their men", "cop attitudes all the time", - on and on. Black women can't stand to see Black men with white women, and can't understand what is going on, so Black men are "dogs", "out to get what they can", "don't care about who they mess with", "insensitive", "uncommunicative", "defensive", and "egotistical".

What happened to the days of Black awareness and consciousness when we used to support each other and stand up for Blackness, gave each other strokes, helped each other get through? Is that spirit of unity gone? I surely hope not, but right now it seems very elusive. Somehow, we need to face up to the fact that we as a people have a serious issue to confront - how we are relating to each other as men and women — and the effects being created as a result of our inability to deal with what's going on.

I see pathologically unhealthy relationships developing more and more in my age group, as Black men and women struggle with their relationships. We are looking for love and attention. We want to feel good about ourselves, and we want our relationships to be happy and fulfilling. But too many of us have been hurt, used, abused, and misunderstood. We seem to have a chronic case of mistrust. We have literally shoved our feelings out the back door, and have produced a generation of cold, lonely, unfulfilled, and very sad people.

I would hope that this holiday season we all spend some time doing whatever we can to strengthen our relationships. As a people, we can't afford not to.

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