

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Upgrade Black education

For months upon end our news reports have uncovered the disproportion and discrepancy facing Black children in the Portland Public School District. Now, we have another incident which again proves that the educational system is flunking in its efforts to educate Black children.

Since 1980 the Russell Payton Awards for winning essayists have gone to 15 students from Harriet Tubman Middle School. Judges from the Education Committee of the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission are given essays to evaluate with the child's name replaced with a number. The criteria utilized by the committee is content, form, grammar and composition. The results have yielded 15 students from each grade level — sixth, seventh and eighth. During these five years there have been 14 white winning essayists and one Black.

By no stretch of the imagination are we criticizing those winning essayists. We applaud academic achievement and competition. But when we have a judging process that is virtually color-blind in a school where the student population is 58 percent Black, one must question if the Portland Public Schools are preparing or expecting Black children to compete in the real world.

Again, we are not picking on Harriet Tubman Middle School. These results just mirror the education provided Black children in the school system.

Since 1980 Black children have scored two to three grades behind the district's average in Reading, Math and Language Arts. Early Childhood Educational Centers (ECECs) have never approached the district's norm academically.

So, some of our children will start middle school with a handicap that follows them all the days of their lives. Created by low expectations and reinforced by institutional racism, Black children in the school system are having their future picked for them.

There was a time when individual counselors recommended to a Black child a future as a laborer or in a service-related job. That overt racism has been replaced with a system that graduates Black children with skills that will only take them so far.

Instead of an ECEC plan to bring Black children up to grade level, teachers and principals focus on behavior and remedial approaches to teaching. They are quick to sidestep blame by shifting responsibility to the home environment. They fail to accept that they have created an educational maze of low expectations and behavior modification.

It is little wonder that Black children develop a sense of alienation in the schools. Many of them feel unwanted and insecure. They respond to the classroom setting with hostility.

The district will say Black children are making gains at rates higher than the district's average. But this claim is deceptive. Gains are being made, but Black children are not catching up to their grade level. The lack of an ECEC plan to bring Black children up to grade level is an indication that the system expects them to stay behind.

What happened with the Payton Award is just one item of evidence that suggests parents are paying money to an educational system that does not give them their money's worth.

OF COURSE ED MESSER SHOULD BE CONFIRMED AS OUR NATION'S TOP LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER



AN INVESTIGATOR APPOINTED BY MY CURRENT ATTORNEY GENERAL STUDIED ED'S BACKGROUND...



AND CONCLUDED THAT THERE ARE NO GROUNDS FOR INDICTING HIM



WHAT MORE RINGING ENDORSEMENT COULD YOU WANT?



Letters to the Editor

The Observer welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should be typed or neatly printed and signed with the author's name and address (addresses are not published). We reserve the right to edit for length. Mail to: Portland Observer, P. O. Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208.

Found Coors offensive

To the Editor,

After deciding I didn't need our local paper every day — wasn't worth the subscription — I subscribed to the Portland Observer. I commend you, and find the paper excellent.

I'm writing, however, about the Coors ad in the Martin L. King edition. I was dismayed that you would accept an ad, no matter how much money, from a racist, non-union company. Coors (Joseph) is a favorite of Ronald Reagan. If my information is incorrect, please let me know. In the meantime, thousands in this country are boycotting Coors beer!! They (Coors) are part of the problem this country faces today.

Sincerely,

VICTORIA PLAISTED

Verify facts on first Blacks

To the Editor,

Alleged information on "Who Is First Black" should be verified with official public documents. Two errors have appeared in recent articles.

October 1984: Mrs. McCoy was reported as the first elected Afro-American (Note: Mrs. McCoy and Judge Deiz were both elected May 1970)

January 1985: Mr. Ford was reported as Oregon's first Black teacher (Note: Mr. Robert Ford and Mrs. Leota Stone were both hired in the same School Board meeting and same resolution number July 1945 for the full school year 1945-1946. The School Board authorization number appears on Mrs. Stone's personnel record and longevity accruals. In the interest of fairness and accuracy, Mrs. Stone's name should be added to the plaque at King Neighborhood Facility.

J. M. GATES

Hire Blacks

To the Editor,

It gives me great pleasure to commend you on your great editorial, "Taxation Without Representation," which appeared in your Jan. 9, 1985 edition. You did the Black community a needed service by pointing out the lack of affirmative action by Mayor Bud Clark and County Commissioner Gretchen Kafoury. I would

suggest that now is the time to start some direct action to assure that Blacks are hired and actively involved on the staffs of these two newly elected officials and any others who don't see the need for Black involvement in the affairs of the city and the county.

SAM JACKSON, JR.

Thanks, Floyd!

To the Editor,

The membership of UHURU SA SA would like to publicly voice our appreciation and thanks for an enjoyable afternoon of soulful entertainment. The entire population of O.S.P. was privileged to experience and enjoy the presence of Floyd Cruse and his Dark Star Revue.

Through the combined efforts of Uhuru Sa Sa, the State Street Jaycees, and a timely donation from the IBM corporation, we were able to make it possible for the men here to enjoy the soulful sounds

This performance was dedicated to the memory of slain civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We are indeed thankful and appreciative for the inspiration of this great Black man, and in keeping with his memory we appreciate the solidarity demonstrated by the Dark Star Revue in such an inspiring tribute.

Sincerely,

ROBERT W. FENTRESS
Coordinator

Looking for the new Booker T.

Along the Color Line by Dr. Manning Marable

Ronald Reagan has a problem. Of all the social groups in American society, Blacks have opposed his administration on virtually every issue. Last November, 90 percent of all Afro-Americans voted against him. Every day for over two months, Black leaders have led nonviolent demonstrations against this pro-apartheid policies in South Africa. The National Urban League, no bastion of Black militancy, issued its 1985 report last week which charged that Blacks were "sliding back in every area of life." With Black unemployment at 16 percent, more than double the white rate of 6.5 percent, it is hardly surprising that virtually every major Black leader is hostile to the administration. Reagan's predicament could be resolved if only he could find a more humble and pliable Negro leadership — in short, another Booker T. Washington. The Black educator and founder of Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, became famous in 1895 for his "Atlanta Compromise" address, which accepted racial segregation and political disfranchisement for Blacks. Washington's accommodationist rhetoric acquiesced to lynchings and institutional racism, while cementing an alliance between Black entrepreneurs and conservative Republicans.

The President's most recent effort to create a new accommodationist Black leadership occurred two weeks ago, when he invited twenty Black businessmen to the White House. None of these special guests had any viable political base within the Black community, and even the media criticized Reagan for this shabby charade. The quest for a new Booker T. must lead elsewhere.

Perhaps Roy Innis, national chairman of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), is a possible candidate. Innis has been a proponent of Black Capitalism, like Booker T. Washington. Reportedly, he has also expressed sympathy for the "subway vigilante", Bernhard Hugo Goetz,

who shot four Black youths in New York. In early December, the CORE leader spoke before the National Black Republican Council in St. Louis, and urged Afro-Americans to "join the Republican Party as soon as possible. The successful desegregation of the Republican Party can be one of the most important and healthy political developments of the Black community and the country at large." Innis' idiosyncratic organizational behavior and Black nationalist affinities, however, disqualify him from serious consideration.

What about Clarence Thomas, chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission? Thomas performed a noteworthy service for conservatives nostalgic for Him Crow by trying to liquidate strict guidelines used to detect patterns of bias against national minorities and women in employment. In the academic field, of course, the leading contenders are Thomas Sowell and Walter Williams. Sowell's recent book condemns the notion that "statistical disparities" in employment imply racial or gender "discrimination." His previous works have applauded corporate initiatives and reductions in federal government programs for Blacks. Williams gained prestige in conservative circles by condemning Black support for the Mondale-Ferraro ticket, claiming that "the election highlights the bankrupt strategy of Black leadership."

But after pondering the situation, Reagan might give the nod to his most loyal Black functionary, Clarence M. Pendleton, chairman of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. Pendleton's recent speeches have made the original Uncle Tom look like Malcolm X. He claims that Afro-Americans have made "tremendous progress" under Reagan, and has even compared Jesse Jackson, NAACP LEADER Benjamin Hooks and other national Black leaders to the murderous evangelist Jim Jones. Rea-

gan's budget cuts and tax policies are "designed to take Blacks on the path-way to glory, from rags to riches, from poverty to parity." But Pendleton's hyperbolic posturing and sorry inability to comprehend the deterioration of Blacks' socioeconomic conditions during the past four years negate his potential to lead anyone anywhere.

The President's frustrated efforts to create a docile Black "leadership" in the image of Booker T. Washington are futile, for two basic reasons. Historically, Booker T. Washington was no Uncle Tom, despite his accommodationist rhetoric. Secretly, he lobbied against segregation codes, and he financed Black economic and political institutions which strengthened the Black community. Washington championed industrial education for Blacks, but sent his own daughter to elite private schools. He accepted Jim Crow railroad cars, but always travelled in the first class sections. Despite legal disfranchisement, Washington and the Tuskegee Institute faculty continued to vote in Alabama during the early 1900s.

The tragedy of Booker T. Washington was that his accommodationist strategy in the long run could not overturn racial discrimination and economic oppression. The tragedy for these new Black conservatives is that they lack even the subtle duplicity of Washington. Thus, we arrive at the second and more decisive factor: so long as Reaganism remains in power, the political and social response from the vast majority of Black Americans will be unqualified resistance.

Say You Saw
It in The
PORTLAND
OBSERVER

Street Beat

by Lanita Duke and Richard J. Brown



C. Nelson
Retired

"It was a smart thing to do. I happen to know her and she's a nice person. Clark might have started something."



Raphael Peterson
Store Owner

"I think it's a good selection. I'm glad women are getting into other fields."



Jan Hust
Office Manager

"Super! I think it's great. She is going to do a great job."



Malinda Whitlow
Nurse's Aid

"It was a wise decision, but I think Clark picked Harrington to boost his career."



Darryl Johnson
Maintenance

"I think it's great! We are all created equal. Women can do a good job as well as men. Harrington had the credentials. Why not give her the chance?"



Jim Laskey
Salesperson

"It's great. I think we set a precedent that women as well as men can hold the same office. Bud Clark is doing what we all should be doing: hiring people regardless of their sex, race, creed or color."



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