



# Along the Color Line

—by Dr. Manning Marable

Dr. Manning Marable is professor of sociology and political science at Purdue University. "Along the Color Line" appears in over 140 newspapers internationally.

## Blacks and Baseball

Poor Al Campanis! Since the former vice president for player personnel of the Los Angeles Dodgers made those unforgeable and unforgettable remarks about race relations in baseball on the ABC news program "Nightline", Campanis has become something of a scapegoat for baseball's racism and a symbol of "reverse discrimination" for the white status quo.

In his controversial interview with Ted Koppel, Campanis made essentially two general points to justify the failure of baseball club owners to hire blacks in upper-level managerial posts. First, blacks lacked the "necessities" to become general managers because they lack the mental capacity to serve as administrators: "I have never said that blacks are not intelligent, but they may not have the desire to be in the front office." Physically, blacks "are gifted with great musculature... They're fleet of foot," Campanis stated. "And this is why there are a lot of black major ballplayers. Now as far as having the background to become club presidents, or presidents of a bank, I don't know."

Second, blacks were judged unsuitable for certain sensitive jobs by their physical or perhaps even genetic shortcomings. Campanis insisted to a mildly shocked Koppel that black men simply couldn't function as quarterbacks, baseball pitchers and/or television anchormen due to physical limitations: "Why are black men, or black people, not good swimmers? Because they don't have the buoyancy."

As one might expect, the political repercussions to Campanis's faux pas were immediate and lasted the better part of one week in the media. A quick analysis of the major league baseball's management jobs showed that blacks held only 1.9 percent—17 positions out of 879 jobs. On sixteen baseball teams, there are absolutely no black employees. Blacks comprise over one fourth of all the players and a much larger percentage of the game's greatest stars, yet one team out of 26 has a black executive in a policy-making position—the Atlanta Braves' Hank Aaron, who serves as vice president and director of player development. Only one team has a black third base coach, Ozzie Virgil of the Seattle Mariners. There are, of course, no black owners or general managers. And out of the hundreds of men appointed as big league managers over years, only three

black men have been deemed qualified for the honor: Frank Robinson, Maury Wills and Larry Doby.

The incident received greater than normal publicity because it happened to occur on a telecast marking the 40th anniversary of Jackie Robinson's major league debut with the Dodgers. Campanis's embarrassing statements could not have come at a worse time for Dodger owner Peter O'Malley, who had no choice but to fire his long-time lieutenant. Baseball Commissioner Peter Ueberroth was also forced to scramble. It is not secret that Ueberroth plans to run for the US Senate in the future, and charges of racism might undermine his political career. When challenged by black sports sociologist Dr. Harry Edwards, Ueberroth pledged to "re-sign" his office if baseball's white owners failed to institute affirmative action measures.

There's nothing more dishonest than to do the right thing for the wrong reason. Ueberroth, O'Malley and Co. had the authority and power to redress racism in baseball for years. Their inaction to date indicates that they share poor Campanis's racist politics, if not his some-what-dated anthropological theories about black swimmers and quarterbacks. They "cut him loose" because he failed to remember the "racial etiquette" of liberal platitudes which is required on national television. Unwittingly, Campanis's mistake was to reveal before the entire world the hideous visage of race hatred, bigotry and crude ignorance, which exists barely beneath the liberal, integrationist facade of the corporate establishment.

After Campanis was punished for revealing the family secrets, his defenders rushed to give him a decent public burial, of sorts. Dodger manager Tom Lasorda sobbed and sighed: "The man never had a prejudiced bone in his body. He never judged a person by the color of his skin." Dodger pitcher Orel Hershiser blamed Koppel and "the power of the media" for Campanis's sacking. Maybe next we'll have an "Early Butz-Al Campanis Defense Committee," raising money for all the unfortunate white powerbrokers who lost their public positions because of verbal blunders on the race question. Al Campanis's real mistake was that he revealed too much of the "truth" about racism in baseball.



# CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

A NEWS SERVICE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST COMMISSION FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

## The Elderly: Their Future is Our Future

Her name is Mrs. Susie Brunson. She is the daughter of ex-slaves. She lives on Long Island, New York. And, at 116 years of age, she is the oldest person in the United States, and possibly the world.

Mrs. Brunson, however, has more going for her than pure age. As one reads her recent interview in NEWS-DAY, a prominent New York daily, one is immediately struck by her strength of character as well as by her indomitable will to survive.

Mrs. Brunson was born in Bamberg, South Carolina on Christmas Day, 1870. Since her birth she has lived under 21 presidents and through 2 world wars, seen legal segregation ended and watched as African American citizens gained the right to vote. In fact, she herself voted, for the first time, at the age of 62, when she moved from South Carolina to Long Island in 1932.

When you hear her speak—you wish you knew this lady, wish you had a chance to share in her wisdom and her memories. She talks of the 300 pounds of cotton she picked every day on her family's farm. But, at the same time she says, "I've never really suffered, because I could always work, and I always had my family to fall back on." Yes, she says, "I had my share of hardship, but my people, we was Christian-minded and raised to loving kindness."

Mrs. Brunson, like any strong tree, has strong roots to nourish her. Those roots were based not only in the African American family tradition, but in the Church as well. As she said, "I just put my faith in Him. God spared my life to see this day." In addition to having faith, Mrs. Brunson also had the strength of will which allowed God to use her. As her interviewer notes, "Her parents... raised her to a standard of pride that came from knowing you could do the hard work and not be broken by it... [She] says she worked at the back-breaking labor because it strengthened her love of the land and of her people."

Mrs. Brunson's story is symbolic of how African American people have generally struggled, and how they survived in spite of all the physical violence and racism. However, we should understand that, in her

longevity, Mrs. Brunson is the exception, not the rule. The statistics on elderly African Americans prove that. For example, in 1983 more than 40% of elderly female African Americans lived in poverty. More than half were either poor or marginally poor.

When it comes to life expectancy, white women live more than 5 years longer than African American women, while white men live 6.6 years longer than African American men. This may not seem like a significant difference until one understands the age at which African American men are expected to die—at 64.9 years of age, just a matter of months before they are eligible to collect their full Social Security benefits. What this really means is that working African American men are supporting the Social Security system by not reaping its benefits.

Also working against the Black elderly is the poor health care system to which they are subjected. The African American elderly are generally discharged quicker, sicker, and without the out-patient services required for their recovery.

Yet, in spite of all the cards stacked against her, Mrs. Susie Brunson has not only survived, but continues to enjoy life. She lives with her daughter, Mrs. Mary Mc Daniel, who is 76. Sitting with her daughter, Mrs. Brunson hums along with her favorite gospel recordings, her strong hands busily working the crochet needles. She also took up bowling at the age of 100 and now has a bowling team named in her honor.

Mrs. Susie Brunson is a living testament to the strength and resilience of the African American family. Yet, in celebrating her longevity, let us not forget that there are millions of African American men and women who, because of the continued racial inequities of this society, will never live half as long as Mrs. Brunson.

We, therefore, issue a clarion call for the declaration of a national priority in behalf of the elderly and, in particular, those who are struggling to survive in African American and other racial and ethnic communities. Let us never forget that the elderly are our roots; their future is our future.

## Letters to the Editor

### Keep Your Beds, Governor

The Governor wants more prison bed space. Corrections want more beds. The Legislature approved 1662 new beds. It seems strange that the Voters said no to new prisons on the last three (3) bond measures and they still build new beds, to Reduce the Overcrowding they say. What they don't say is there is about twenty-five hundred (2500) prisoners waiting to enter the Corrections Division. How is 1662 beds going to help! It will just be that many more prisoners to feed and house! If the Governor and Corrections have to do something to reduce the constant overcrowding, why don't they do something **Positive** instead of feeding the failing system? Why don't they reduce recidivism, and thereby cut the need for expenditures. While at the same time keeping the Unity and Emotional ties to the Family.

Quality time with ones family means keeping the family together. Family unity reduces recidivism and makes for productive citizens returning to the community. Quality time with the family would reduce the prison population by 20%. This occurs when the inmate has a family to return to, instead of the streets and more criminal activities. Most people know how a loving relationship will disappate anger and resentment. It will also help the inmate back into the community. Oregon is one of the most progressive and liberal states in the nation. Let's keep our standards intact! Vote Yes on HB 2536, and save money and families. THE FAMILY YOU HELP SAVE MAY BE YOUR OWN!!!!

James Atwood, No. 42074  
Salem, Oregon

### Blacks Need Each Other

The economic system of the United States was set up on the racism of the white man owned and the Black man bought. People forget when Blacks could only shop at white-owned businesses in Portland — not work there.

The economic survival of Black-owned businesses is solely contingent on support from the Black community.

I support the ad run by the Observer encouraging this.

Jesse Rogers, St.

## EDITORIAL/OPINION

### Doing Something About Child Abuse

by Dennis Woods,

Executive Vice-President  
Parents Education Association

We've simply got to do something about child abuse! How many times have you heard that plaintive call to action? While we all want to "do something" about child abuse, the "something" being proposed in the state legislature can only serve to exacerbate a very difficult problem.

The 12-bill package proposed by Attorney General Dave Frohnmeyer threatens stiff fines and loss of license for psychologists, lawyers, clergy, and other professionals who fail to report cases of suspected child abuse. Such a system is certain to produce an avalanche of overreporting, which will leave CSD (Children's Services Division) caseworkers buried under a mountain of trivial cases. CSD officials are required by law to investigate every complaint they receive.

In the process innocent families will be unnecessarily harassed and cases of genuine abuse are more likely to slip through the cracks. It is happening already. Because the media awareness of the sickening reality of child abuse, most states including Oregon, have moved precipitously to set up anonymous hotlines.

We have had an explosion of hotline calls nationally, and in Oregon over the past five years. It is this very increase of reports, the bulk of which are unfounded, according to readily available statistics (American Humane Association) that lets true abusers go unnoticed amid the mass of false reports.

This trend is documented in "Doing Something About Child Abuse," published in the Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy, Summer, 1985, by Douglas J. Besharov. Besharov is former prosecutor and the first director of the Health and Human Services National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect.

According to Besharov, "Overreporting, thus, is more than simply unfair to parents. It places a further burden on chronically understaffed child protection agencies. Forced to allocate a substantial portion of their limited resources to the 'unfounded' reports, protective agencies often are unable to respond promptly and effectively when children are in serious danger." Again, he says, "Overwhelmed by cases of limited danger to children, decision-makers often are insensitized to the obvious warning signals of immediate and serious danger."

The response of CSD to this problem is to request additional funding to deal with the growing number of

leads they must track down. Given the realities of the state budget and limitations on the money available for these services, such a request is unrealistic, if not irresponsible.

Besharov offers a more effective solution. "More money, by itself," he says, "will not address the basic cause of the problem." He notes that the major cause of the system's decision making problems is the vagueness and overbreadth of the legal standards governing state intervention.

As Giovannoni and Bacerra observe in their book, "Defining Child Abuse," "Many assume that since child abuse and neglect are against the law, somewhere there are statutes that make clear distinctions between what is and what is not child abuse and neglect. But this is not the case. Nowhere are there clear-cut definitions of what is encompassed by the terms."

SB 782, a bill currently logjammed in the Senate Judiciary committee, addresses what Besharov and a whole host of others say should be our first priority—a good working definition of child abuse in statute law. This bill would limit child abuse to clear sexual and physical assault. It avoids the ambiguities of the existing law which speaks in terms of failure to provide "adequate" or "necessary," food, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision or "nurturing". It eliminates catchall phrases like "includes, but is not limited to, any bruising or discoloration of the skin as the result of physical discipline."

The problem with this kind of phraseology is that it is a blank check for a mandatory reporter, who faces the possibility of civil and criminal liability for not reporting. It is Besharov's contention that "imprecise definitions inexorably lead to often unpredictable and unjustified intervention into family life." He believes that "definitional improvement is a social and political issue of the highest magnitude."

The proposed Oregon law would clearly, but simply define abuse as "any physical injury or sexual abuse inflicted on a child other than by accidental means, except that discipline by those responsible for his care." The law would then go on to specify those acts or conditions which constitute physical and sexual abuse. These include such things as damage to bones or teeth, permanent skin disfigurement, rape, and sodomy. All very specific.

Yes, let's do something about child abuse, but let's do something that will start us down the road toward real solutions.

**PORTLAND OBSERVER**  \$15 for one year  \$25 for two years

Box 3137, Portland OR 97208

Mr. Mrs. Ms. Miss

Street Apt

CITY STATE ZIP

CLIP IT

TO START THE PORTLAND OBSERVER COMING EVERY WEEK

Support Our Advertisers!  
Say you saw it in the

## Portland Observer!

**Portland Observer**

The Portland Observer (USPS 969-680) is published every Thursday by Elm Publishing Company, Inc. 1463 N.E. Kangas, Portland, Oregon 97211. Post Office Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208. Second class postage paid at Portland, Oregon.

The Portland Observer was established in 1970.

Subscriptions: \$15.00 per year in the Tri-County area. Postmaster: Send address changes to the Portland Observer, P.O. Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208.

288-0033

Alfred L. Benderson, Editor/Publisher  
Al Williams, General Manager

National Advertising Representative  
Amalgamated Publishers, Inc.  
New York

MEMBER  
**NATIONAL NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION**  
Association - Founded 1885

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.