

Education: Past & Present

by Professor McKinley Burt

As a lead article I would like to introduce the reader to this passage from a book by William L. Katz, "Eyewitness: The Negro in American History", Pittman, 1967, p. 115 (now out of print).

My point is that, over a hundred years ago, Black educators (and students), the newly-freed slaves, were making excellent educational progress and were demonstrating cognitive abilities that defy, in most cases, a comparison with today's innercities. And many will recall that in the preface of my book, "Black Inventors of America", page 6, I cited General Saxton, Commander of the United States Department of the South, as he wrote in the official government military annals (1866-1869): "On some of these islands off the coasts of Georgia and South Carolina, the freedmen have established civil governments with constitutions and laws. Further, they have set up all the different departments for schools, churches, building of roads, and other improvements." (For a look at the current condition of these Black people, see the feature article of the December National Geographic Magazine.)

Now, let me ask the reader a silly question: Are we turning out, today, Black high school graduates who can perform at that level? Remember, now, that we have a \$100 billion dollar educational establishment with more real estate and equipment than the U.S. General Services Administration, and with over 91 varieties of administrative,

teaching and support-type personnel. My series of articles will examine and question this 'machine' — but for now, let us look at this excerpt from "Eyewitness":

A Black Schoolmaster in the Deep South

[Daniel A. Payne, a free Negro of Charleston, opened his first school in 1829. He taught three children during the day and three adult slaves at night. Each pupil paid 50 cents a month. As his expenses mounted he became discouraged and quit. Then a white man told him that the difference between a master and slave was "nothing but superior knowledge," and Payne decided to reopen his school.]

On the first of the year 1830 I re-opened my school, which continued to increase in numbers until the room became too small, and I was constrained to procure [a larger] place. This in turn became too small, and one was built for me....

During the three years of my attendance at the school of Mr. Thomas S. Bonneau I learned how to read, write, and spell; also arithmetic as far as the "Rule of Three." Spelling was a delightful exercise of my boyhood. In this I excelled.... History was my great delight. Of geography and map-drawing, English grammar and composition I knew nothing, because they were not taught in any of the schools for colored children.... [He then managed to find a geography and atlas for his classes.]

... at the same time with geography I studied and mastered English grammar.... I therefore added that to my curriculum.

Having now the groundwork, I began to build the superstructure. I commenced with "Playfair's Euclid," and proceeded as far as the first five books. The next thing that arrested my attention was botany.... Descriptive chemistry, natural philosophy, and descriptive astronomy followed in rapid succession....

Then, on a Thursday morning, I bought a Greek grammar, a lexicon, and a Greek Testament. On the same day I mastered the Greek alphabet; on Friday I learned to write them; on Saturday morning I translated the first chapter of Mathew's Gospel from Greek into English. My very soul rejoiced and exulted in this glorious triumph. Next came the Latin and the French. Meanwhile I was pushing my studies in drawing and coloring till I was able to produce a respectable flower, fruit, or animal on paper and on velvet.

My researches in botany gave me a relish for zoology; but as I could never get hold of any work on this science, I had to make books for myself. This I did by killing such insects, toads, snakes, young alligators, fishes, and young sharks as I could catch. I then cleaned and stuffed those that I could, and hung them upon the walls of my school-room....

My enthusiasm was the inspiration of my pupils. I used to take

my first class into the woods every Saturday in search of insects, reptiles, and plants, and at the end of five years I had accumulated some fine specimens of each of these....

... it was also one of my methods in order to interest my pupils to erect several gymnastic instruments, that they might develop their muscular systems and find amusement to break the monotony of the school-room; but in all their sports I led them in person....

Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne, "Recollections of Seventy Years" (Nashville, 1888), pp. 19-25.

Very obviously this passage represents the same level of Black educational expectation and commitment that I described as still in existence as late as the 1930's (in an October 28 interview by this newspaper). It cannot be said that the Portland School District has been unaware of the historical depth and excellence presented by any of these earlier models. After all, as early as 1969 Dr. Helen Edmonds, Dean of the Graduate School at North Carolina Central University, was brought here to conduct a two-week Black History Session for Portland high school teenagers at Portland State University. What can be said is that there has been a consistent and traumatic failure on the part of this school system to related its chaotic taxonomy of educational objectives to a realistic appreciation or understanding of the clientele, or of its history, or of its motivational modes. How long, oh Lord, how long?

Garvey Scholar Honored by Black Students

Dr. Tony Martin, well-known expert on the Marcus Garvey Movement, was recently honored by the National Black Student Unity Conference meeting at Howard University in Washington, D.C. A thousand students from sixty universities and colleges around the United States spent three days in late October in workshops and discussions. At an awards banquet Dr. Martin was presented with a specially inscribed plaque "For truth and integrity in historical research." Dr. Martin, professor and chairman of Black Studies at Wellesley College in Massachusetts, is the author or editor of eight books on the Garvey Movement, including "Race First," generally acknowledged as the classic study of the largest international Black mass movement of all time.

Conference organizer Abdul Haqq Islam in introducing Dr. Martin noted that Black America has long honored its athletes and entertainers. The time had come, he said, to show similar recognition for outstanding scholarship. The entire forward movement of Black peoples in the twentieth century owed a tremendous debt to Marcus Garvey, he said. Dr. Martin, through twenty years of unrelenting research and publication had made available to subsequent generations a record of Garvey's achievements that would always inspire the African world.

Also honored was Marcus Garvey himself, for "Dedication and service

to African-American students." Garvey's award was accepted on behalf of Garvey's two sons by William Jackson-Bey of the Washington branch of the Universal Negro Improvement Association.

Other speakers at the conference included Minister Louis Farrakhan, national spokesman of the Nation of Islam and Kwame Ture (formerly Stokely Carmichael). Presidential candidate Rev. Jesse Jackson was scheduled to speak but had to cancel at the last moment.

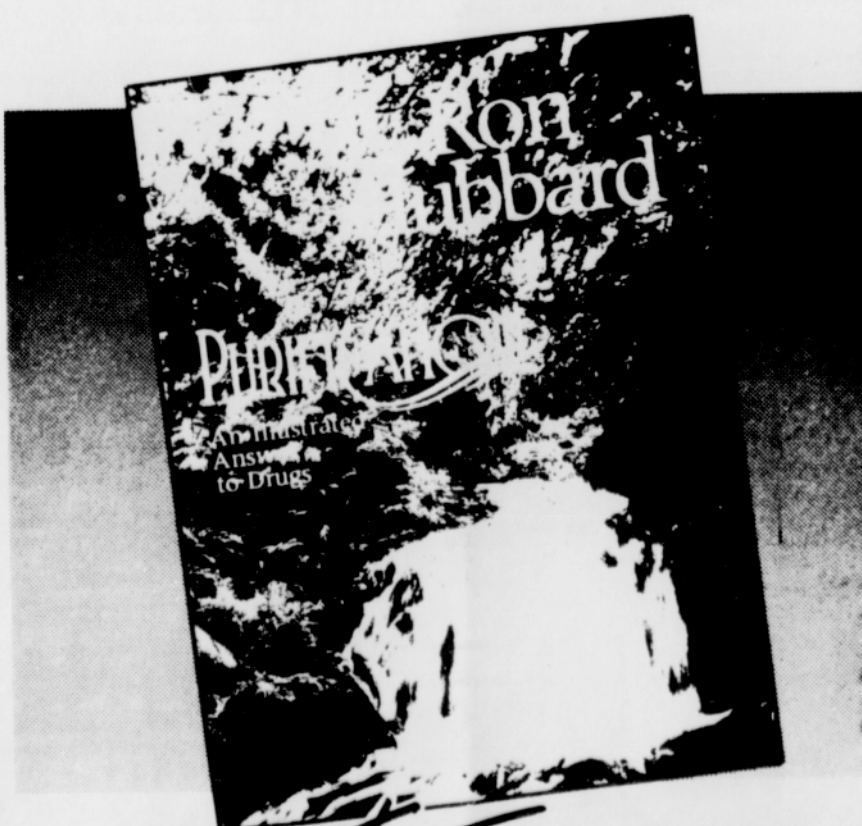
Dr. Martin delivered the keynote address at the awards banquet, on the subject of "Students as Leaders." He pointed out that students had always played a crucial role in African-American history, from the first African-American newspaper, Freedom's Journal in 1827 to the pioneer literary and historical societies of the nineteenth century, to Garvey's own movement during and after the First World War, and right up to the Civil Rights and Black Power struggles of recent times. Marcus Garvey was a part-time student in London immediately prior to starting his Universal Negro Improvement Association in 1914. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had only recently finished graduate school when he assumed leadership of the Montgomery Improvement Association in 1955, thereby ushering in the Civil Rights Movement.

The conference was sponsored by the National Black Student Unity Congress.



Liam Callen, Executive Director of the North/Northeast Community Mental Health Center, Inc., sitting in a van that was donated by Pacific Northwest Bell (P.N.B.), receives the keys from Russ Brown, Chairman of the Northwest Community Relations Team of P.N.B. arranged the donation of the van that will be used to transport clients of the center.

Photo by Richard J. Brown



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Dear Citizens of Roseburg

More than 40 years ago, Black poet-writer Countee Cullen wrote the following poem:

"Once riding in old Baltimore, heart-filled, head willed with glee, I saw a Baltimorean keep looking straight at me. Now I was eight and very small, and he was no whit bigger, and so I smiled, but he poked out his tongue and called me, 'Nigger.' I saw the whole of Baltimore from May to December; of all the things that happened there that's all that I remember...."

The poem describes human ugliness, contempt and morbid human hostility: an up close and personal encounter of the worst kind.

On the night of November 27, 1987, at the AAA football playoff game in your fair community of Roseburg, fans, cheerleaders and football players from Portland's Benson High School were greeted by a human ugliness of the worst kind: cheerleaders were pelted with rocks, the lives of Black students were threatened, and the most frequently heard chant was "Nigger go home!" The scene was reminiscent of America during her heydays of racial ugliness.

Prior to journeying to Roseburg, our African-American community had great expectations of your community. It was felt, despite rumors to the contrary, that your community would welcome our children with open arms. It was believed that the coming together of the two communities would be done in the best of American tradition. Our children looked forward to what they considered a "grand affair"; a competitive meeting between two of Oregon's top AAA football teams. Instead, they found themselves in foreign, hostile land.

However, Roseburg is not a land set apart. It belongs to a nation where the architects of our republic signed a promissory note to which every American is an heir. This note, the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, was the promise that all Americans would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The ugliness of racism and the absence of justice that prevailed in your community on the night of Nov. 27, leaves a deep, ugly scar on the heart and soul of African-American communities throughout the State of Oregon. The honor, the dignity and the humanity of your community was tarnished by football fans who deliberately carved horrible memories onto the hearts, souls and minds of our children.

The State of Oregon's reputation as an insurer and protector of the human rights and dignity of all its citizens has been atrociously stained and plunged into uncertainty.

In our community of African-Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans and white Americans, we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men, women and children are created equal. We believed it when we sent our children to your community and we still believe it now. We also believe that a threat to justice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere — even in your community. And if your community can only guarantee the unalienable rights of self-hood and self-dignity to certain Oregon citizens, rather than to all of its citizens, then your community has defaulted on its promissory note of honoring this sacred obligation as far as Black Oregonians are concerned.

The football fans of your community stripped our children of their selfhood and dignity. In response, Black and white Oregonians form our community are gathering around the conference table to decide how they will respond to this injustice. It is their perspective that certain citizens of your community deliberately created life-threatening conditions based on a disrespect for the law, and a disrespect for the rights and safety of our children and the fans who accompanied them.

This is a time for action.

We ask that the law-abiding, freedom-loving citizens from your community acknowledge the tragedy. We believe that most citizens there are decent, responsible people. And we believe that the majority of your citizens seek harmony with their neighbors regardless of their color.

Thus in the spirit of equality, racial harmony, and democracy, we urge you to condemn the actions and behaviors of your citizens on the night of November 27. We urge you to take a stand against racial hatred, racial injustice, and racial violence. We urge you to erase the stains of dishonor your community now bears. We urge you to gather together with us to heal the wounds our community, your community, our children, and your children have suffered.

By doing so, we will all learn how to rise and walk again.

Sincerely,
Nyewusi Askari

Harassment Law

The following is a copy of the current law on harassment in the State of Oregon:

166.065 Harassment. (1) A person commits the crime of harassment if the person intentionally:

(a) Harasses or annoys another person by:

(A) Subjecting such other person to offensive physical contact; or

(B) Publicly insulting such other person by abusive words or gestures in a manner intended and likely to provoke a violent response;

(b) Subjects another to alarm by conveying a false report, known by the conveyor to be false, concerning death or serious physical injury

to a person, which report reasonably would be expected to cause alarm; or

(c) Subjects another to alarm by conveying a telephonic or written threat to inflict serious physical injury on that person or to commit a felony involving the person or property of that person or any member of that person's family, which threat reasonably would be expected to cause alarm.

(2) A person is criminally liable for harassment if the person knowingly permits any telephone under the person's control to be used in violation of subsection (1) of this section.

(3) Harassment in a Class B misdemeanor.

MHCC Holiday Registration Set For Dec. 29, 30

For the first time since initiating a week-long Christmas holiday closure three years ago, Mt. Hood Community College will open its doors Dec. 29 and 30 for winter-term registration. Four key student service areas, admissions, the business office, financial aid and the bookstore, will be open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on those days. All other MHCC offices will be closed Dec. 25 through Jan. 3.

In previous years the calendar has

allowed for at least one full day of registration after Jan. 1 and prior to the first day of winter term, said registrar Marilyn Kennedy. However, since Jan. 1 is a Friday and classes are due to start Monday, Jan. 4, college officials were concerned students would be unduly inconvenienced by a full holiday closure.

For more information, contact Kennedy at 667-7368.

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