

South Pacific Islanders Seek Freedom From U.S. Authority



Roman Bedor reads the inscription on the plaque presented to him honoring his father who was assassinated. Photo by Richard J. Brown

On Tuesday, January 12, 1988, Roman Bedor, a key figure in the legal and political battle over the future of the South Pacific island of Palau, spoke at the Lutheran Church, 5431 N.E. 20th, Portland. The event was sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee and the Palau Constitutional Supporters, a group of Palauans living in Portland.

Palau sits in the western Pacific 700 miles southwest of Guam. In 1947, the United Nations mandated Palau and neighboring Pacific islands as the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. And since the United States had captured these islands from Japan, it was named the administering authority.

According to Bedor, the United States now want Palauans to accept economic aid in exchange for U.S. military rights to Palauan land and waterways (including visits by nuclear armed ships and aircraft). The aid package is estimated at between \$500-million and \$1-billion.

Such an agreement would be binding for the next 50 years.

In 1979, Palauans adopted a constitution that prohibits nuclear weapons in Palauan territory. The constitution, Bedor explained, was Palauans' way of moving toward self-government, as well as establishing a new legal relationship with the United States. "The majority of Palauans have no desire to remain a United Nations Trust Territory and are distressed that America shows no concern for the inhabitants and the welfare of the people of Palau," Bedor said.

According to Mr. Bedor, Palauans on the island are being intimidated, threatened and killed, because they resist the terms of a document called the "compact of free association." The compact would make Palau a sovereign nation, but would leave the United States in charge of the island's defense. The conflict has divided the Palauan government, which has been identified as the main source

of the intimidation. The compact was rejected five times by Palauan voters before passing. Bedor says that compact passed only because the majority of Palauans were afraid to vote otherwise.

While listening to Mr. Bedor speak about the tribulations of Palauans, it was easy to imagine that he was speaking of the conditions African-Americans are trying to overcome in this country. The Palauans who were present at the meeting could easily be mistaken for African-Americans.

"We adopted an American-style constitution, because we feel that it speaks to the heart and soul of Palauans. We are a peace-loving, law-abiding people. World War II is over. We want to get on with the process of living, of raising our families and developing our country. We've been in this situation every since World War II, and any-

one who thinks that we want to remain in that situation has narrow vision. We want the world to realize our connection with the brotherhood of man and woman, and we can do that if we are self-governing," Bedor said wearily.

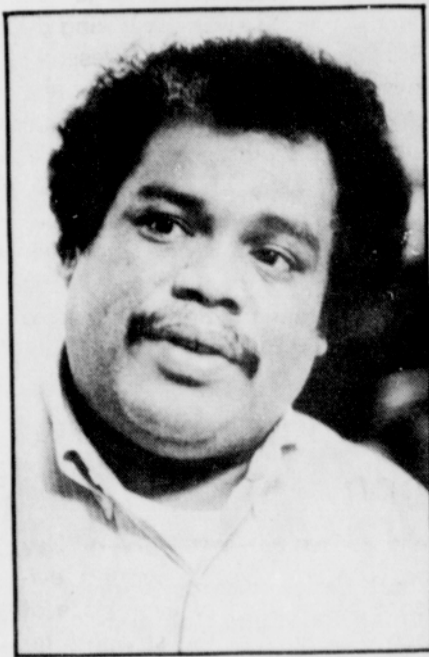
The conflict hit close to home when Bedor's father, Bings Bedor, was shot and killed September 9. Many Palauans believe the bullet was intended for Roman, who, as a member and founder of the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Network, successfully challenged the constitutionality of the Compact of Free Association in 1986. He is also a lawyer.

"The assassination of my father strengthened my resolve to continue fighting for Palau's right to self-government," he said.

Bedor explained that Americans can help Palauans by writing to the State Department's Micronesia Desk. "Let them know that you believe that Palauans have the right to self-government and would like to see it happen. Talk to your neighbors about us. Talk to palauans in your community."

The largest community of Palauans on the west coast lives in the State of Oregon; a fact I didn't know until I attended the meeting. I also didn't know that there are a significant number of Palauans living right here in the Black community.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Bedor was presented with an award. He said it was the highlight of his travel to the United States. "It makes me feel good to know that my work is appreciated, and I feel very humble that this community would see me fit to receive it. The folk back home won't believe, but the proof is in the pudding," he said, with a laugh.



"The assassination of my father strengthened my resolve to continue fighting for Palau's right to self-government." Photo by Richard J. Brown

Perspectives

by Professor McKinley Burt

What did the Reverend Martin Luther King mean when he said that Blacks "collectively, are richer than all the nations in the world, with the exception of nine"? And when he said that "Blacks have an annual income of more than thirty-billion dollars a year . . . that's power right there, if we know how to use it"? Was it more about this 'economic' aspect of his message that brought about his murder than the social content? Today, Black purchasing power is put at over a hundred-billion yearly!

My central theme most weeks has been to highlight many of the economic resources of technology (inventions) created by, and available to, Blacks over the last century.

ECONOMICS

Several readers have called or written to inquire, "Great, so where do we get the money to finance, manufacture and distribute all these creations?" My reply has been that it is not such a big step to perceive that all of this purchasing power, described above by Reverend King, represents a practical vehicle for generating the needed monies. It is not a new or isolated concept, having been projected or initiated by individuals and groups ranging from Marcus Garvey to Madame C.J. Walker, and from the Black Muslims to Tony Brown and his 'Green Power' theme.

We are talking about the ownership and cooperative control of retail and service enterprises, just as the 'new Asians' and other ethnic groups have done. And then moving 'upstream' to wholesaling and manufacturing many of these products. At present, we do not make anything even so simple as a natural comb or a box of paper clips. During my ten years of accounting in Los Angeles, one of my clients was the Globeware Manufacturing Company. The business experience of the owners (Jewish) was in wholesale candies, but now they had decided to manufacture skillets, pots and pans in pastel colors — something they knew nothing about, but had seen in a European magazine. They pooled their money and sent one partner to Belgium to observe the process there, and the other two spent hundreds of hours in research in the public library. In addition they took temporary night jobs in a metal manufacturing plant to gain several months of hands-on experience.

I would make two major points here, my observations being based upon being involved in every financial and administrative aspect of this

company. This was 1957, and I was able to draw upon my Portland experience of setting up Union Avenue Finance Co. for car dealers to set up a house-to-house distribution component for Globeware's 'Nine-Piece Cookware Master' — "Comes In Six 'Glorious' Colors". At \$295 a set, retail, the bank scooping off \$60 for handling the housewives' contracts and the salemen getting \$100, the money flowed like wine, since the product only cost \$49.95 to make.

My first point is that I had a number of Black business clients at the same time, and I can state that the partners at Globeware did not have any more initial capital or later resources than the Blacks. We will talk another time about lifestyles and conspicuous consumption.

Secondly, as I shall make clear in next week's article — about The Albina Corporation, the nation's largest minority manufacturing company in 1969 — Globeware comfortably stayed within the limits of what its operators were qualified to do in terms of abilities and finance. This Portland company did not.

The process of producing pots and pans required only three raw materials and four machines: sheet steel, degreasing fluid and ceramic grit; metal shears, punch press, welders and grinders (painting was farmed out). The process was so simple that in a tight labor market, the owners would go down to the Greyhound Bus Station and intercept Blacks and Hispanics with their shopping-bag luggage, hiring them on the spot. Within six weeks they would be turning out utensils — and that with only a 5% rejection rate, and supervised by one of their own. Fascinated with this introduction to manufacturing, and seeing many applications within the 'Black Economy', I began a further learning process by 'contributing' my spare time to the company. On Saturday mornings, I would take a semi-truck and trailer down to the docks at San Diego and bring back a load of Japanese cold-rolled steel. I would unload it with a fork lift, and then maybe spend the afternoon changing dies in the punch presses or using a spot welder to put handles on the skillets.

Like many of my peer group with these kind of skills and experience, we expected to be welcomed with open arms by the Black community and Black business sector. Not to be! As Dr. Cruse said on Monday's Oprah Winfrey Show, the 'social engineers and programmers' have failed to understand that the basic nature of this system is about sales, production and ownership.

McKenzie River Gathering Foundation Announces Spring, 1988 Funding Cycle

The McKenzie River Gathering Foundation (MRG) which funds peace, human rights, and environmental groups in Oregon, announces its Spring, 1988 funding cycle. MRG encourages grant applications from groups which:

- educate and organize for social change;
- practice affirmative action in their group's composition and program outreach;
- have little access to traditional funding sources, e.g., United Way, government, churches, other foundations; and
- strategically address their issue.

MRG does not fund co-operatives, health centers, alternative schools, and projects that are primarily social service or that involve influencing legislation or electoral campaigns. Grants generally range from \$500 to \$2,000. Recent MRG funding cycles have supported groups addressing: issues affecting people of color, women, and lesbians and gays; Central America; nuclear disarmament; progressive media; Mid-East peace; pesticide reform; AIDS; and wilderness protection.

Groups interested in submitting a project proposal should contact the MRG Eugene office to receive the foundation's application form and accompanying materials. The application deadline is Monday, March 7th. Linda Reymers, MRG Program Director, is available to answer any questions about applying for an MRG grant. MRG is located at 454 Willamette, Eugene, OR 97401. The phone number is 485-2790.

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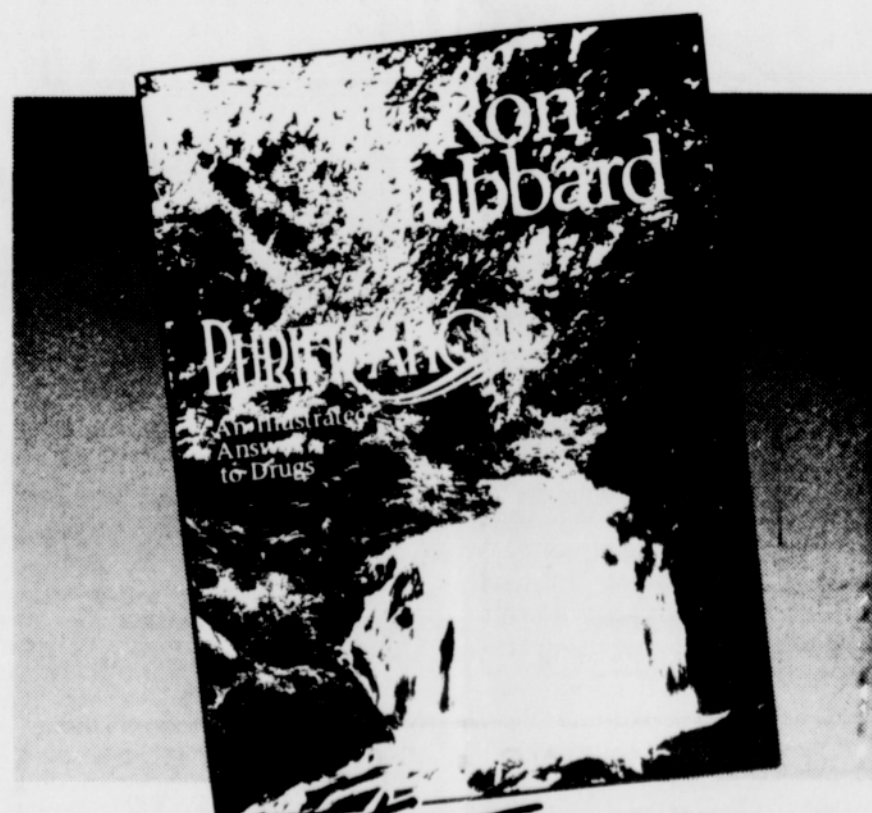
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