

EDITORIAL / OPINION

EDITORIAL

Promote Community Self-Help

When it comes to survival, African Americans are capable, qualified, insightful and productive.

Emerging from a condition of absolute American slavery, African Americans have committed themselves to achieving full participation in all aspects of American life.

The ironic thing about American slavery was America never truly paid its economic debt to those it enslaved. As a result, African Americans were forced to start a new life under less-than-ideal conditions.

Reconstruction, the period after so-called emancipation, failed because of America's refusal to fulfill its promise of total inclusion of Blacks into the American mainstream. Instead, African Americans found themselves facing the violent rage of the KKK, Black Codes, betrayal by the United States Government and every other conceivable miscarriage of justice.

However, these conditions didn't deter the African American quest for social, political and economic freedom.

As the 20th century draws to a close, Black Americans have made economic growth and development a top priority. Led by capable men and women, the movement is gaining momentum, and all African Americans are being urged to participate by spending more of their income with Black businesses.

In an effort to support this important development, **The Portland Observer** is urging Black Oregonians to join the "Buy Black" Campaign. The campaign is designed to promote community self-help through economic growth and development, and the development of youth programs which will address problems of drug and alcohol addiction and abuse, teen pregnancy, crime and other major issues of concern to Black Oregonians.

The Portland Observer is also urging Black Oregonians to re-examine the attitudes, behaviors and practices of local business and corporate establishments toward the Black community. We are asking Black Oregonians to decide whether it's sensible to spend their money at establishments that do not contribute to the social, political and economic growth and advancement of the Black community.

Now is the time.

Freedom & Social Justice

by Alexander R. Jones

Anti-Drug Push Gains Momentum

Drug abuse in our nation's schools is a tragedy which is not only destroying and crippling our youth, but is also threatening our future as a nation. Sixty-one percent of all high school seniors have tried some form of hard drugs, while one out of twenty smoke marijuana daily. Small children as young as seven or eight serve as runners for drug dealers.

Into this frightening arena steps the Concerned Businessmen's Association (CBAA), a group determined to get drugs off of school grounds within five years. This year, as it has done since 1986, the CBAA is sponsoring a contest which will award \$5,000 to the student organization which creates and implements the best anti-drug campaign for its school. There are three contest divisions: high school, junior high, and elementary.

The name of the competition is the "Set a Good Example Contest." Each year this contest has grown in popularity. Celebrities ranging from John Travolta to Kim Fields, star of "Facts of Life" have endorsed it. Corporations ranging from MacDonalds to IBM have given financial support. And according to Jerry Sierra of the CBAA, the current contest which ends April 1, 1988 has already attracted over 3,000 schools from around the country.

The really heartening aspect of the contest, however, is the response it has sparked among students. The anti-drug events pulled off by the students of Eunice High School in Eunice, Louisiana, are particularly inspiring. These students arranged for their biology class to do research on the effects of drugs on the body, the math class did surveys on the student body to discover their attitudes towards drugs, the drama class put on skits, and the list goes on and on. They even got the local newspapers, radio and TV stations to cover their campaign. Not surprisingly, Eunice High School won the 1987 contest in the high school division.

For more information about the 1987-88 "Set a Good Example Contest", and rules, write to Alex Jones, Church of Scientology, 400 C Street, N.E., Washington, D.C., 20002.

Civil Rights Journal

Benjamin F. Chavis Jr.

Natchez, Mississippi: The Movement Renewed

In many places these days you get a sense of the Movement renewed. Nowhere is this more evident than in Natchez, Mississippi in Adams County. For the past month the African American community of that city of 22,000 has been engaged in an effective economic boycott of the white-owned commercial district. They have done so over a concern which takes precedence over all others — their children.

As African American Alderman George Harden of Natchez said, "We can no longer sit by while those in authority make unwise and unchallenged decisions that will continue to have a negative impact upon the children of Natchez for the rest of their lives."

What is at issue here is a school system which is 70% African American but which continues to be white-run. In fact, the school administration is 87% white: all 11 department heads are white and three of four assistant superintendents of education are white. Interestingly enough, the one African American superintendent is the only one of the four to hold a doctorate.

In 1979 a federal government study showed that Natchez was among 15 of the most segregated school systems in the nation. What this means is that North Natchez High School, which is all-Black, has no auditorium, an inadequate library, an inadequate gym without even a track field and a limited curriculum. South Natchez High, the white school, is located just two miles up the highway. It not only has an auditorium, its auditorium is air-conditioned, as is its cafeteria and its gym. It also has a track field and a considerably more advanced curriculum.

For months the Black elected officials from Adams County met with the powers-that-be to gain improvements. Their pleas fell on deaf ears. That's when these Black elected officials became boycott leaders. Alderman Harden, County Supervisor Phillip West and State Representative Barney Schoby joined forces and organized the Concerned Citizens of Natchez. In December they

were joined by a fourth official, newly-elected county supervisor Thomas Campbell.

When they announced the boycott, they did so at a press conference attended by 45 community leaders and heads of organizations. Since then, the regular meetings of the Concerned Citizens group have never had less than 400 people in attendance. And the most recent program, held on Martin Luther King's Birthday, drew over 700 people, as well as a number of Black elected officials from all over the state of Mississippi in support of the boycott effort.

These days, very few African Americans can be seen shopping in downtown Natchez. Stores like K-Mart and Kroger's food store are already beginning to feel the heat. And the Natchez/Adams County Chamber of Commerce admits that the boycott is having a great impact on the community. When asked why the boycott was so successful, Alderman Harden pointed to the Black elected officials, noting, "Each of us represents many thousands of people and we've represented them well for years, so the people trust us. They know that we wouldn't get out there — or get them out there — unless we had our facts and our strategy together." Indeed, their strategy is very together.

Car pools are coordinated through the boycott headquarters from 9:00 in the morning to 9:00 every night. No one is turned away. Similar to the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955, the car pools are staffed by volunteers. Much sacrifice is involved. Some folks have to travel as much as 125-200 miles away, even going into Louisiana to get what they want. But they help each other with rides, for this is a united effort. As Alderman Harden mentioned, "Wherever there's a cause, there's sacrifice. The people knew that when we took this thing on."

Yes, the spirit of the Movement continues to be renewed in places like Natchez, Mississippi. And each effort, each success, contributes to sustaining the on-going freedom movement. For this, we should all be thankful.

The Civil Rights Journal, written by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., is a publication of the United Church of Christ

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

1. Who is Dr. Jamil Cherovee?
2. For whose benefit is he writing?

I would appreciate some sort of response to this inquiry.

Matthew Chavis

Who is Dr. Cherovee

This week a curious reader asked, "Who is Dr. Jamil Cherovee and who does he speak for? . . ."

To that curious reader, we give the following reply.

Dr. Cherovee, for years, has been a faithful supporter of **The Portland Observer** newspaper, and, like all of our subscribers, he speaks for himself. By doing so, he never fails to give his honest, and sometimes painful views and opinions on issues raised by **The Portland Observer**.

The Portland Observer views itself as "The eyes and ears" of Oregon's Black citizens, rather than as a newspaper that speaks for the Black community. Our purpose is to inform, educate, inspire, challenge unfair policies and practices, and to provide a medium through which Black Oregonians can be heard.

We are sure that **Portland Observer** subscribers and readers will agree that Dr. Cherovee takes full advantage of that medium.

As Tom Peterson says, "Free is a very good price."

Why are We Losing the War on Crime?

Editor:

Concerning "War on Crime Losing," 11/25/87: To be young and Black in the internal colonies of the United States is to be subjected to all the harshest elements of oppression at the most vulnerable period of one's life. And, it is in the machinations of internal colonialism that we see the future of Black Amerika [sic], its young people, decimated by their role as a reserve labor force, military pawns and disruptive force in the Black

communities around this nation. The process of colonization threatens to make Afro-American [sic] youth its primary victims. It is they who will suffer most from the oppressive rule of the colonial order. As a group without the psychological maturity of adults or the emotional shelter of children, they are most vulnerable to the dynamics of racism in its most crude form.

The Armed Service Committee will bring back the draft next year. Since about one-half of all Black labor force dropouts are male teenagers, the poor Brothers who happen to miss prison will be called to serve that laughing hyena who calls himself our Uncle Sam. While such a situation may be disastrous to the Black community, it serves the interest of the colonial order quite well. Afro-American [sic] youth now comprise the largest segment of the industrial reserve army. Capitalism maintains this category of workers at the lowest level of subsistence, and uses them when its industries require additional workers in the event of economic expansion. At the same time, they provide competition to other workers by seeking their jobs, and, hence, depressing wages are particularly appropriate for this role, because they do not think of themselves as a class, they have few family responsibilities, and possess little political consciousness or leverage. As the most powerless of a colonized group, they are especially valuable in this role.

One might dismiss the problem of unemployment of Black youth as being relatively insignificant in the overall picture of Black oppression. Yet, to many low-income Black families, the additional income of their teenage children is vital to their existence. This is particularly true during this period when many adult males have lost their jobs. Moreover, many of these young Blacks will, themselves, be heads of households. More than half of all Black births are from Black teenagers between the ages of 14-19 in some inner cities. When these teenage mothers are unable to find work, they are forced into dependency on the meager sum allotted to them by

welfare institutions or prostitution. They face an economic reality entirely different from that of the caucasoid teenager, who can more effectively use his kinship and friend-of-the-family network to secure employment.

Around this nation, I see rage and frustration in the Black communities. A feeling of despair and hopelessness arises from the intolerable high levels of unemployment. There is bitterness over the lack of significant political power. Many poor young people roam in the streets and loot and fight back because, even if they don't, they will end up trapped in a racist system of criminal justice. I'm inclined to believe there is an insensitivity on the part of the entire criminal justice system toward the poor. I believe that astronomically high levels of unemployment, especially among Black teenagers, are linked to both crime for profit and racial violence. History has a way of repeating itself.

A very real division in economic resources — a very unequal distribution of wealth — means that while incomes are rising for some, unemployment and poverty loom for many. The haves accumulate and the have-nots must watch with


frustration. I'm sure the Mayor is aware crime and violence are generated by the control that the powerful seek to exert over the powerless.

There are a few Brothers and Sisters who understand that to remain silent is to endorse the injustice and to dishonor ourselves. Multiply by ten the combined atrocities of Attila the Hun, Tamburlaine, Genghis Khan, the barbarians of the Dark Ages, and Adolf Hitler — and you will not begin to match the crime against mankind that this country is plotting. Hitler saw to the slaughter of six- to seven-million Jews, Gypsies, Poles, and Russians. All were innocent of any offense. Hitler's final solution, until now the metaphor for unimaginable cruelty and brutality, resulted only in mountains of skeletons, rivers of blood, tons of human cinders.

Only the most crazed advocates of preparation for thermonuclear war argue that such a war will end with winners and losers. Every reasonable person knows there will be only losers. There is a hint of divine retribution in this arrangement — that the arch-criminals of all history should perish by their own device. Make no mistake about it, we are the arch-criminals.

Dr. Jamil Cherovee

Look for Our African American History Special February 10, 1988



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Clark Reports — Continued from Page 1

Chuch Duffy, Assistant to Mayor Bud Clark, said the Mayor feels the continuum of services concept is a "tremendous proposal. This is what the Mayor has been calling for for the past three years. . ."

Response from other local and

state elected officials, as well as justice system administrators, has also been supportive of the triage proposal. Michelle Williams, assistant to Clark, explained that support was hardly surprising since Clark had sought the input from 50 of those officials, including Oregon Corrections director Michael Francke

and Portland Chief of Police Richard Walker, in formulating his original proposal.

When asked if the continuum of services offered by the county could include training in basic moral values along the lines of City Commissioner Bob Koch's "boot camp for criminals," Don Clark said that

he was not hostile to such an approach, or to others that may be put forward. Said Clark, "There is no single panacea for crime. [The answer isn't just] more jails or more cops on the street or more social services alone. . . Crime is a complex phenomenon that needs to be attacked on a variety of fronts."