

Perspectives

by Professor McKinley Burt

Immigration: Does History Repeat?

During the past year there has appeared in the Black press a rash of articles citing the negative economic impact of Southeast Asian emigration to the urban centers of this country. The authors perceive as quite real the possibility that these immigrants of color will cause the further disintegration of an already precarious Black economic situation.

Their concerns range from the competition for increasingly fewer jobs at the unskilled and semi-skilled level (a category where the bulk of our under 25 age group is to be found) — to the rapid acquisition of 'small businesses' in Black neighborhoods (where the bulk of Black entrepreneurship is found). If the prognosis is correct, Blacks are facing the greatest economic disaster of their post-slavery experience. But it has happened before and with almost point-to-point correspondence with certain historical 'Immigration Benchmarks' which I shall cite here.

Something has been said, I believe, about the fate of "people who learn nothing from history." There may be readers who think they are not threatened because of their civil service or union status. But certainly a number of economic events occurring under this administration should disabuse them of this false sense of security. Daily media report of layoffs, cutbacks and outright abolition of large public agencies reveal that neither civil service or union seniority qualifies as a "safety net."

It has been said that if white European immigration had not been cut off by submarine warfare during the First World War (1914-1918), Blacks would have long since joined the Indians on reservations. Already, by use of restrictive covenants, mortgage discrimination, disinvestment and violence, Blacks had been forced into central city ghettos across the nation. Within these 'Bantustans' only whites (for the most part 1st and 2nd generation immigrants) could obtain bank loans to finance business enterprises or commercial property. Nor, for the most part, were Blacks

granted franchises or distributorships for consumer goods ranging from appliances to clothing, from buggys/automobiles to hardware or jewelry. These 'perks' were reserved by the financial and industrial establishment for the immigrants, and, through quotas and blood line preferences, for successive generations of their relatives.

As a prologue and companion piece to this scenario — the new slavery — we find that with the period highlighted by the Plessy vs Ferguson' decision of 1896 ("separate but equal") there came about a very rapid loss of the few gains Blacks had made since the Civil War. A case in point is that where Blacks had begun to make some gains in the skilled trades (DuBois, Franklin, Rudwisch, Meier, et al), by the turn of the century, the craft unions, burgeoning with poor white Europeans, now voted the Blacks out, (Metal Trades, Plumbers, Operating Engineers and Northern Building Trades). And with the advent of the A.F.L. — American Federation of Labor — there came the exclusionary clause in these unions: "For White Males Only."

But his cruel and divisive American social phenomenon did not begin here, but was institutionalized by government beginning with the "South Carolina Immigration Bill of 1866" (Commager, Documents of American History, Document No. 257). We quote below:

"The demand for industrial labor, the opening up of the west, and the disorganization of the labor system of the South, all led to official as well as unofficial efforts to encourage immigration. Most Southern States attempted to attract immigrants to take the place of the negro worker, but uniformly without success'. In South Carolina a state commissioner of agriculture was created and a pamphlet advertising the attractions of the state published in several languages and 'distributed widely throughout northern Europe'. See F.B. Simkins and R.H.

Woody, South Carolina During Reconstruction, p. 243 ff.

But the disclaimer, given above, "... uniformly without success" is obviously pure fiction as we know from experience and the quote below from the "Shell Manifesto" January 23, 1890 (Charleston News and Courier):

"The peculiar situation now existing in the state, requiring the united efforts of every true white man to preserve white supremacy and our very civilization even has tended to 'make permanent' the condition which existed before the war. Fear of a division among us and consequent return of a 'negro rule' has kept the people quiet..."

The 'immigration caper' did not end here. No sooner did the Black Ninth and Tenth Cavalry assist in 'protecting' western railroad building from the Indians, than we find the Union Pacific and other railroads establishing 'Immigration Offices' in the key port cities of northern Europe. They advertised for whites of "good stock" to come to America to occupy at little or no cost the bountiful lands astride the new transcontinental railroads — none for the "Buffalo Soldiers."

It would seem a matter of the most urgency that our leaders and national social agencies be about addressing the current economic problem before history indeed repeats itself. The only thing that will help is massive economic planning (and implementation, for a change) by Blacks, for Blacks, and with Blacks. That "capitalization of Black buying power" we have always talked about will have to be done, or else we may face in the new future a poverty unforeseen in modern times. There was not room here to detail here the more recent course of American immigration policy. It is not that good in the racial sense. For the interested reader a good overview is to be gained from reading the September, 1966 issue of 'The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science: The New Immigration.' You can find it at your public or university library.



City Commissioner Dick Bogle (L) and former Multnomah County Sheriff Lee Brown (R), now the Chief of Police in Houston, Texas, took time out to visit at a recent gathering of the national Policy Institute, an educational conference of Black elected and appointed officials, in Washington, D.C. Bogle and Brown shared thoughts on crime prevention — the top priority in both Portland and Houston — and the importance of neighborhood crime prevention efforts. Brown was a panelist in a discussion of "Attacking Crime in the Black Community."


Identity & Survival

by J.M. Gates, MBA

It is easy to be confused by filters of illusion and delusion. When the dust settles, what do you see? For example, "scope and sequence curriculum committee."

If an auto factory had a committee to write a blueprint plan and another committee to produce the auto without accountability or standards of relevancy, chaos would prevail. A defect in the blueprint would produce a "lemon" auto. So it is with Portland Public Schools' scope and sequence; Millner's name appears on a policy statement but not on the implementation lesson plan volumes (even though operational reality is a part of any product). The operational reality leaves many questions.

On page 97 of the above-mentioned statement, Griffith's "Birth of a Nation" is cited without any notation of Afro-American film development during that period. Said deficiency continues in lesson plan volumes. Is equal opportunity education being served by omitting existence of minority-initiated films as historical facts? The same omission continued in recent community events with a featured speaker publicly stating that Black film development would not be cited (not even as a resource footnote). What, then, do we celebrate?



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See Entertainment Page



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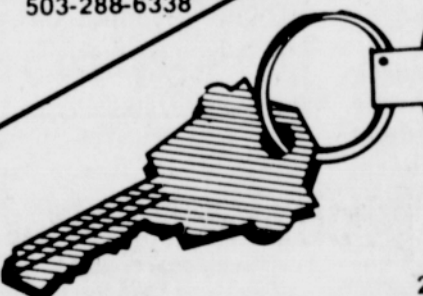
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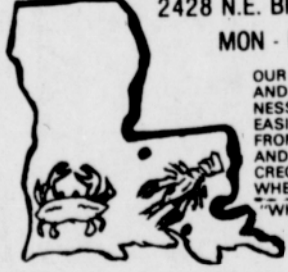
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