

EDITORIAL / OPINION

EDITORIAL



Along the Color Line

Manning Marable



Civil Rights Journal

Benjamin F. Chavis Jr.

The Revelations of Town Hall

On March 20th, Town hall, a KATU-TV public affairs program, presented a one-hour program on the subject of racism. According to the show's moderator, Jack Faust, the program was to address such penetrating questions as "How common is racism?", "What forms does it take?", "Who benefits from racism?", "Should we try to compensate victims of racial discrimination?", "Or does this only lead to reverse discrimination?", "Does the media perpetuate racist attitudes?", "How can we break down these stereotypes?", "Are some people just overly sensitive?"

Penetrating questions to be sure. However, when the show aired last Sunday, it turned out to be merely a day of grace for racists throughout the City of Portland — a day when they cried crocodile tears.

Of course the show's intentions were good. Yet, if you were an African-American watching the show, a frequent question kept popping up: Why wasn't there more representation from the so-called responsible white leadership? Why did the City of Portland and the State of Oregon fail to come on the show and reveal to Oregonians what is being done to nip this morbid problem in the bud? Did they stay away simply because very little is being done to bring Portland and Oregon on-line with its African-American citizens and the need for comprehensive, enforceable and practical laws to combat racism in this state?

From an African-American point of view, the Town Hall show was merely a discussion between African-Americans, Asians, Hispanics and a few white folk. Those white folk turned out to be a mix of everything from racists to affirmative action haters to the very few who viewed racism as wrong and intolerable. As usual, the voice of the American Indian was missing.

The Town Hall Show was symbolic of how Portland and the State of Oregon go about dealing with the race problem. Talk. Talk. Talk. The prevailing attitude appears to be confusing the issues with small talk. "Let sleeping dogs lie." Find other ways to deal with the problem rather than go straight to the heart of the matter.

Many white Oregonians appear confused when it comes to identifying and recognizing racism, although American racism is a white invention. This invention, which led to the enslavement of Africans in America, tends to upset many whites when talked about openly and honestly. However, no amount of denial or being upset will get rid of the fact that American racism was invented by whites and will remain a part of this country's fabric until whites find the courage to confront it within themselves. Racism started within, not without.

That some whites are pushing the idea of "reverse discrimination" is an illusion and a misadventure. To even use the words "reverse discrimination" is to say that African-Americans are taking the personality, the values and the character of white racism and using it against whites in the same way whites have and are using it against African-Americans. This is an untrue assumption. White Americans in this country have yet to experience an invented form of "black racism". If African-Americans would have had the need to invent a new form of racism, they would have done it during their enslavement. And this racism would have been based on the belief that all white people are evil because of their actions and because of the color of their skin.

Malcom X, the great African-American Muslim leader, once said, "When you put a rope around a man's neck, you can expect him to fight and scream about it." When white Americans put the ropes around the necks of African-Americans, African-Americans fought and screamed. They didn't go silently to their deaths. But, neither did they see the need to invent a new form of racism in order to equalize white racism. Instead, they began to push the notion of brother/sisterhood, a togetherness of the races, a forgiveness of those whites who had conspired to make life very miserable for all persons with black skins.

When African-Americans react to white racism, in whatever way they deem necessary, it cannot be called "reverse discrimination." It is a reaction to, a response to, a defensive reflex to something that is dangerous and deadly.

We hope the Youth Gang Task Force was listening when members of the Eastside Skinheads expressed their brand of white racism. We hope Mayor Bud Clark and Governor Neil Goldschmidt were listening. We hope the Portland Police were listening. We hope they heard what we heard: that the Skinheads are neo-Nazis and are determined to keep African-Americans out of East Portland and elsewhere. Their brand of racism is meant to injure, hurt and even kill. And if that's not serious, then chicken ain't poultry.

KATU and Jack Faust showed a lot of courage by creating a forum from which diverse opinions and beliefs could be expressed. We commend them sincerely. However, the show also revealed just how far apart many white communities are from their Black, Hispanic, Asian and Indian neighbors.

In the future, we would rather hear about what the City of Portland and the State of Oregon are doing to diminish the tide of white racism. We would rather hear what white leadership is doing to eliminate the problem. We'd rather hear what white businesses, corporations and educators are doing to help solve the problem. We already know what the problem is and who is perpetuating it.

But, more importantly, we call on the responsible white leadership and white citizenry to stand up and be counted. We implore them to start acting as role models for their children who will one day go out into the world and help shape it. We ask them to confront racism wherever they find it, even within themselves.

The time is now.

The Politics of Black Higher Education

Part I of a Two Part Series

In recent months, hundreds of Black students across the country have been protesting the continued existence of racism in white colleges and universities. At Bradley University in Illinois, for example, Black students have picketed their administration for its failure to recruit minority faculty and staff. At the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Black undergraduates seized a building for several days, forcing their president into negotiations concerning campus racism.

The factors behind such demonstrations are obvious. Despite the rhetoric of Affirmative Action and equal opportunity, most white college administrators have done little to recruit or retain Black faculty, staff or students at white academic institutions. As federal cutbacks in higher education intensify, crippling the prospects of Blacks, Hispanic and low income students, many white universities are reducing funds to Black Studies Departments and Minority Affairs Offices.

Black educators, parents and students alike need to devise a counterstrategy designed to advance our collective interests, in a period of political retrenchment and social reaction. Our starting point should be an analysis of the effectiveness of Black institutions which are located on white campuses. Other than Black Studies departments, there are at least three other institutions or organizations which Black control at white colleges: Black Cultural Centers, Minority Affairs Offices, and Black Student Unions.

The cultural centers were a by-product of the Black Power upsurge on white college campuses in the late 1960s and early 1970s. By the mid-to-late 1970s, there were perhaps as many as 150 cultural centers throughout the United States. The objectives of the Black cultural centers were to sponsor social and cultural events, concerts, plays, dances, and other activities which gave Black people a chance to interact with each other in a social environment which was nonthreatening and non-antagonistic.

The centers also frequently sponsored academic lectures by visiting Black scholars, community forums and speeches on contemporary issues, students mentoring programs, and libraries.

The major problem, which affected these centers was the racism of most white administrators, who didn't want to finance more than one well-funded Black institution on their campuses. Consequently, at most white colleges, the cultural center was for-

The Minority Student Programs were created under the auspices of the offices of student services or student life on most white campuses. By the last 1970s over 3,000 Black administrators were employed at white institutions, as many programs designated specifically to recruit and to retain Black students came into existence. Office of Minority Affairs usually included some or all of the following programs: academic and learning skills supportive services; personal counseling, dealing with Black students' emotional and personal problems and attempts to adjust to a predominately-white environment; sponsoring Black cultural activities and lectures on campuses; internships and parttime jobs for Black students in the private and public sectors during the summer months; and assistance for preparation for the Graduate Records Examination, LSAT, and other tests.

As with the Cultural Centers, the Offices of Minority Affairs frequently were marginalized by white administrators on white campuses. There was often a very high turnover rate among Black counselors and professional staff, which was reinforced by low pay and a sense of institutional isolation. Central administrations also frequently reduced minority staff positions and budgets after the Blacks and Hispanic student unrest subsided on their campuses.

The only way to reverse racist trends on white campuses is to build strong Black academic institutions in these institutions. Black parents have an obligation to demand that colleges set aside substantial resources to support Black academic supportive services and cultural programs, before sending their children to such schools. Black educators must come together to reinforce the goals of academic excellence and institutional accountability, in order to create an environment which the numbers of Blacks may be increased.

ced to compete against the Black Studies Department or Minority Affairs Office for steadily decreasing funds. Come Black administrators took the short-sighted view that only a certain amount of money would be spent by their universities on "Black Issues", and that any funds for Black faculty salaries, competing Black programs and so forth indirectly affected their own institutions. The politics of institutional austerity sometimes fed the politics of negative competition between Black educators.

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Drug Abuse Funds: Reagan "Just Said No"

President Reagan's drug prevention program has popularized the slogan "Just Say No." Well, the President certainly knows the meaning of the word. He has said "no" to adequate funding for urgently needed drug prevention, treatment and rehabilitation programs since he took office.

The President says that the country is "beginning to win the crusade for a drug-free America," while his wife, Nancy, says, "The people who casually use cocaine are responsible" for the drug crisis. Both statements divert attention from the major problem — lack of funding for drug programs. From 1980 to 1986 the Reagan Administration slashed funding for such programs by a whopping 40 percent, according to the Congressional Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control.

The effect of insufficient funding for these crucial programs as noted by Diane Canova, Director of Public Policy for the National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (or NASADAD). This non-profit organization is composed of the state administrators of publicly funded drug prevention and treatment programs. Clearly, they know whereof they speak.

Ms. Canova discussed the impact of the funding cuts, saying, "In most states waiting lists for drug treatment are common, usually averaging a 2 to 3 month wait. What this means is that even when intravenous (IV) drug users finally make the decision to seek treatment, they are being turned away and then have nowhere else to turn. These users are at particularly high risk of contracting and spreading AIDS."

It is estimated that there are, right now, as many as 1.5 million IV drug users in this country. NASADAD estimates that only 10 percent of these addicts are currently being treated. More importantly, they also estimate that an additional 30-40 percent of these addicts would seek treatment if only it were available.

The Administration, with its usual one-step-forward two-steps-back approach, has pro-

posed an increase in drug abuse funding over last year. But, as Ms. Canova points out, this level which the Administration agreed to only because Congress forced the issue.

We have all become alarmed by the evidence of the increasing drug crisis — and the related AIDS epidemic — in our communities: the young people who roam our streets like the walking dead, the innocent children who have been slain by errant bullets during battles by drug dealers.

The nation's cities are under siege. Yet the funding for those programs that might offer some relief is woefully inadequate. Rep. Floyd Flake, the Congressman from Queens, NY, sections of which are ravaged by drug violence, reminds us that on the federal level, the \$3 billion earmarked for drug education and enforcement represents a meager 1% of the \$300 billion defense budget. And this at a time when the drug abuse crisis has been called the number one threat to this country's national security.

The question then becomes — what can we do? First, we should be aware that Congress is now in the thick of negotiations over certain key items in next year's budget. The President's own AIDS Commission has recommended that \$1.5 billion a year should be spent on drug treatment and rehabilitation. This funding proposal is a start but it should be increased.

In addition, we should understand that the Reagan Administration continues to fund the very right-wing dictatorships, from Columbia to Panama, which supply the drugs in the first place. This must be stopped.

Next, we should make sure that the drug crisis becomes a major issue during this year's presidential race. Only Jesse Jackson has thus far emphasized this issue.

We can no longer throw up our hands as if this problem were insurmountable. We must treat the problem like the life-threatening crisis that it is. We have no alternative.

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

until West Africa was a vast arid waste through which wandered a few old men and women and homeless children. Black men and women had died fighting or were driven into holes in the ground to dig and dig and dig.

The so-called christian caucoid conquerors divided the land among themselves and the British called their section the "Gold Coast".

If one look at the land which guards entrance to the bay, one see the old fortress, Christianburg Castle, where African women were raped at will, high on the rocks and jutting well out into the water. This castle is preserved today, symbol of the so-called christian caucoid man's power since the early 18th century. It was by way of the Gulf of Guinea that most of the African slaves started on that long, perilous journey from which none ever returned. And the course of those vulture vessels across the Atlantic Ocean to America is marked by the bones of those who perished at sea.

Here is where it all began — Our History. And no one in Ghana forgets. Today, independent and free as only a handful of nations in the world are free, Ghana writes fresh and glowing pages of history. She has reinstated her ancient gods, returned her chiefs to their place of honor, honors her dead and recalled many of the lost children of her ravaged land. Now, without hate or recrimination, apologies or hesitation, Ghana moves forward to take her

place in the modern world — not as a suppliant, but as a leader among those who would build a new social and economic order for the betterment of all.

We cannot depend on the public so-called educational system to teach Black History. Teachers and educators must help Black students to deepen their acquaintance with their own rich and prideful history. When I was in the South several weeks ago, a beautiful Black grandmother told me: "If all the rivers, swamps and woodlands of the Southern countryside could recount the tales of the tens of thousands of black bodies trust into watery graves, strung up on unoffending trees, tortured and murdered by church-going, Democrat-voting caucoid defenders of the "American way of life," their story would be too horrible for decent humanity to bear."

Clearly, then, we are dealing not merely with a single "ease" or even a number of "cases" of intimidation and murder. The late Roy Wilkins, executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, provided the clue when he stated: "we are dealing with a system!" What is this system whose most graphic and revol-

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PORTLAND OBSERVER
"The Eyes and Ears of the Community"
288-0033

PORTLAND OBSERVER

OREGON'S OLDEST AFRICAN-AMERICAN PUBLICATION
Established in 1970

Alfred L. Henderson/Publisher Leon Harris/Gen. Mgr.

PORTLAND OBSERVER

is published weekly by Exie Publishing Company, Inc.
5011 N.E. 26th Ave.
Portland, Oregon 97211
P.O. Box 3137
Portland, Oregon 97208
Phone Number: (503) 288-0033

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Deadlines for all submitted materials:
Articles: Monday, 5 p.m.; Ads: Tuesday, 5 p.m.

The Portland Observer welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts and photographs should be clearly labeled and will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed envelope.

Subscriptions: \$15.00 per year in the Tri-County area.

The PORTLAND OBSERVER — Oregon's oldest African-American Publication — is a member of The National Newspaper Association — Founded in 1885, The Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc., New York.



OPINION

by Dr. Jamil Cherovee

El Mina

Today universities throughout the world are turning their attention to the histories of Black people. The arrogant assumption that the children of Africa should be grateful for the crumbs of civilization and culture which fell to them from the caucoid man's table has been blown away by the hurricane of change sweeping over Africa itself.

I'm inclined to believe Black educators should visit the ancient land of Ghana, which name once designated most of what is now West Africa. It was a land of plenty, abundance of food, hills covered with fine woods, lakes and wide rivers besides which dwelt happy and prosperous peoples. Traders came and went; from the city of Timbuctoo caravans of goods traveled across the

northern plains of Tunis, to Alexandria, through Tashkent to Peking. Order and justice and peace reigned in Ghana.

Then, on an evil day came ships from the North-Portuguese, Spaniards, Danes and later English. These newcomers saw the gold ornaments worn by the people of Ghana, gazed in amazement at the golden stools of their chiefs and the fine casting of bronze pots. Greedily they fingered the gold nuggets with which the children played, and son terror stalked the land.

Old maps preserved in the archives show the land of El Mina, one huge mine of wealth. They tore and gutted the earth, butchered the people, quarreled and fought among themselves. For a long time gunsmoke hid the sun, rivers and brooks turned red with blood, forests were destroyed