

# EDITORIAL / OPINION

## OPINION

### The Long Ride Home

by Nyewusi Askari

From the moment the cab picked me up in downtown Portland to take me to Northeast Portland, I knew the cab driver was going to engage me in a conversation about race.

Adjusting the pay meter, he looked straight at me and asked, "What do you people do in Northeast Portland?"

"What do you mean 'you people'?"

Sensing that his question had caused me some discomfort, he backtracked. "I don't mean to sound like a racist or anything . . . When I say 'you people', I mean the colored people who live in Portland."

I did not stare back at him. In fact, I barely heard his answer. I was too busy recalling the last time I had heard the words "Colored People." To make the recollection, I had to travel back in time and space — to the old South.

Temporarily, I found myself facing signs that said "For white only," "For colored only," "For coloreds, animals and dogs." I could hear the voice of the white sheriff who screamed at my mother, "You colored people betta make sho y'all outta town befo sundown." Temporarily, I recalled that the words "colored people" was merely a substitute word that meant "Nigger."

Determined to make the cab driver feel my displeasure at his using the term "colored," I asked him why did he use it and did he know that a large majority of Black people considered the term offensive.

His face turned beet red. Struggling to find the right words, he said, "You know, I've always wondered about that. In the town where I grew up, there were no Black people living there. The only thing I knew about 'em was what I had read and had been told. And, buddy, believe me, it wasn't too complimentary."

"The first term I ever heard to describe a colored, er, I mean a

Black person was the word 'nigger'. In other words, where I lived, Black people were defined as niggers."

I felt my jaws tighten. "What was a nigger in your community's estimation?" I asked him.

We rode in silence for a long time before he answered.

"A Nigger was anyone who had black skin. Someone who was different than us white kids. Someone we could kick around without feeling guilty about it. Someone we treated lower than a dog. Someone we were taught to be afraid of. Someone we were taught not to trust."

"Are you afraid of me?" I asked.

"You want an honest answer? Frankly speaking, yes, I am. I don't know who you are. You could be a dope dealer, a pimp, a robber."

"Well, what about the three-piece suit I'm wearing and the briefcase I'm carrying?"

"It don't mean nothing," he was quick to say. "Most white people like myself are taught to judge you by your color. Right or wrong, that's the way it goes down. A lotta white people won't tell you this face to face. But you watch 'em close and you'll see their fear. You'll see it when you meet 'em walking down the street. Some will cross over to the other side. I have gotten many late evening calls from white women, in particular, who were afraid to walk to a bus stop, because a group of Black men were standing there waiting for the bus. Some white people won't even ride Tri-Met because they know Black people will be on the buses. I know I'm prejudiced, but I ain't that bad. You go your way. I go mine. I don't mess with you. You don't mess with me . . . Don't you think that's good thinking for an ol' mid-west white boy?"

I didn't answer. I didn't want him to know how distressed he had made me feel. He had made me feel like a nigger.



### Along the Color Line

Manning Marable

### Jesse Jackson at the Crossroads

Part II of a Two Part Series

Jesse Jackson's massive victory in the Michigan caucus late last month has raised the possibility of the Country Preacher winning the Democratic Presidential nomination this year. Jackson campaign manager Gerald Austin and Rainbow Coalition leader Ron Daniels have argued repeatedly that Jesse has a mathematical possibility of winning. But the political powers and corporate interests which exercise decisive influence within the Democratic Party did not create a method of electoral participation which would allow the elevation of a progressive or Black candidate as presidential nominee, regardless of the number of popular votes he received.

Party leaders have created a "superdelegates" category, consisting of 640 Congresspersons, Governors, and Democratic officials, who are not elected by the public, but who will participate at the convention. Already, Dukakis is quietly consolidating his base among the superdelegates, pushing the case that he is the only electable candidate the Democrats have. Austin has counterattacked ineffectively, claiming that "fairness" will be a major issue in Atlanta. "What (Jackson's) saying is, 'If I get the most popular votes or most delegate votes and superdelegates are not voting as a reflection of those votes, that's unfair,'" Austin insists. But there was nothing fair about the 1984 Democratic Convention, when Jackson came in with nearly one fifth of the total popular vote and came out with only eleven percent of the final delegate vote. This year's rules are only marginally more "democratic" than those employed four years ago. Austin's protests will persuade very few white Democratic leaders.

Jesse Jackson is now at the political crossroads. One route could take him even further down the road toward political moderation, from the viewpoint of Democratic powerbrokers and the media. The impulse to project himself as a "serious" candidate who has a reasonable chance at winning the nomination has already watered down several progressive policy positions Jackson had taken previously on the Mideast as well as other issues. Black Democratic leaders like California's Willie Brown are uniting behind Jackson largely for narrow, opportunistic reasons. They know that their exhortations against Jesse backfired dismally in 1984, and they stood little chance to derail the Rainbow's momentum in 1988. By embracing Jackson, they are doing what their Black constituents expect them to do. But it represents neither a change of political ideologies, nor any kind of commitment to progressive change beyond this specific campaign. In this contest, Coleman Young's endorsement of Dukakis was at least an honest display of his own backward and bankrupt politics. Many Black officials are less politically honest.

Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition will go to Atlanta with great expectations, only to discover perhaps that the "real deal" which selects the presidential nominee already has been cut. At one level it's a question of simple arithmetic. Even if Dukakis is successful in winning this month's New York Primary, and the important Ohio, New Jersey, and California primaries later this spring, he will probably fall short of the delegate total required for nomination. If so, there are at least two ways which Dukakis can secure the nomination which are denied to Jackson. One way would be through the superdelegates' bloc of votes. The other maneuver would be to give the vice presidency to Al Gore, who would probably come to the Atlanta convention about 600 delegates. Gore would accept the offer, because even if the Dukakis-Gore ticket lost in the general election, the race would catapult him as the De-

mocrats' probable presidential nominee for 1992. Jackson will be left out of the primary political "wheeling and dealing" because he is perceived as too far to the "left," and also because he is Black. We should expect some concessions to the Rainbow in terms of the Democratic Party platform, and we should press successfully for the selection of a list of Black, Hispanic and progressive leaders who would be appointed to high administrative office under a Dukakis presidency — such as Dr. Mary Frances Berry as Attorney General, TransAfrica's Randall Robinson as Undersecretary of State for African Affairs, or Attorney Eleanor Holmes to the Supreme Court.

But there is a second political road available to Jackson, which is filled with potential difficulties, but would permit him to have a fundamental impact upon the future of American politics. Jackson could tell his voting constituency what every white political pundit knows — that he will probably never be given the Democratic presidential nomination. He could explain candidly that the American political system is not designed to produce fundamental alternatives in both the primaries and the general election. Despite an extensive mobilization of millions of Black, Hispanic and white voters behind the progressive and left populist economic and social agenda, the Democratic party would easily deny the nomination to the sole candidate who represents to a great extent a major departure from the sterile, anticommunist, bipartisan policies and leadership who have dominated this country since the end of the Second World War. Jackson should state unhesitatingly that even if he somehow emerged with the Democratic presidential nomination, both major parties would conspire to derail his election.

The real value to this electoral mobilization is in its capacity to elevate key progressive public policies which the mainstream of the Democratic Party would uncerimoniously bury in its futile effort to promulgate a type of "Reaganism with a Human Face." The Rainbow challenge represents an assault against the conservative trend within the Democratic ranks, as well as a logical, electoral extension of the more progressive elements of the Civil Rights Movement. But one of the significant lessons of that movement was the realization of the basic limitations of electoral politics. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X never ran for elective office, yet they were able to exercise a powerful impact upon Black American history.

Jackson has a similar opportunity to alter the course of political and social history, if he recognizes the necessity to build a permanent structure and movement outside the Democratic Party to advance his public policy positions and political ideals. No matter what the outcome of the the November election this year, most of the policies pursued by the new administration and Congress next year will probably not differ substantively from those legislative initiatives taken during 1987-1988. To break the two party monopoly over the democratic process, we must establish a permanent Rainbow political bloc outside of the Democratic Party, which has the capacity to organize voters, to lobby legislative officials, to picket and lead demonstrations, and to educate the masses of people in the tools of the political process. This approach takes a protracted, long-term view of the democratic struggle which must be waged against both major political parties, as well as those elitist and powerful

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### Civil Rights Journal

Benjamin F. Chavis Jr.

### The Assassination of Julian Pierce

An assassination is always painful. It is particularly painful when it takes from us a leader who was beloved by his people and whose potential was so vibrant. Julian Pierce, a Lumbee Indian attorney and activist in Robeson County, North Carolina, was just such a man. He was killed on March 26th of this year.

Atty. Pierce had decided to run for a newly created Superior Court judgeship in the May primary. It was a dangerous decision. For this is a county in which drug corruption reputedly reaches even into the offices of the sheriff and other local officials. In addition, Pierce's opponent was Joe Freeman Britt, an established member of the power structure that runs the county. Mr. Britt is the current District Attorney and holds the world's record for sending more people to death row — primarily Native American and African American — than anyone else. In fact, he's in the Guinness Book of World Records for this dubious distinction.

Together, the Native American and African American populations make up 58% of Robeson County. Dexter Locklear, finance committee chairman for Pierce's campaign, noted that the passage of a recent school referendum showed the potential of the combined strength of the Native American and African American votes. Through Julian Pierce's candidacy, that coalition would have been strengthened even more.

Who was this man and why did someone feel he was so dangerous that he was shot-gunned to death in his own home? Pierce was born and raised in neighboring Hoke County, graduated from college to become a chemist and then returned for his law degree. After receiving his master's degree in tax law from Georgetown University he worked with the Securities and Exchange Commission in Washington, D.C.

Atty. Pierce could have stayed in Washington, earning a comfortable living and working decent hours. Instead, he made the decision to return home to help empower his people. In 1978 he became the first director of Lumbee River Legal Services, formed to provide legal aid to the poor of that area.

Atty. Pierce prepared the petition for official Federal recognition of the Lumbee Nation which would give them control over the community and its economic development. Pierce was also called upon to assist with numerous cases of unsolved murders of Native Americans and African Americans, some even involving the local police.

However, Julian Pierce was not only involved in the law; rather, he participated in the entire life of his community. He was instrumental in organizing and served as chairman of the Robeson County Health Corporation which operated medical clinics in Robeson County towns. He also served as chairman and chief fund-raiser for an on-going out door play which dramatically exposes the oppression of the Lumbee community while reinforcing the beauty and strength of their culture. The unceasing energy commitment and brilliance of Julian Pierce touched all segments of the Lumbee community.

Yes, Julian Pierce was a powerful force in his community. Dexter Locklear, his campaign aide, emphasized this when he said "[Julian's death] is going to rally people together. This will make the Indian people stronger."

The time has come when all

Americans must stand together against all forms of racial injustice. The continued oppression of Native Americans — one of the gravest examples of racial injustice — must be challenged until the victory of freedom and justice is won.

## OPINION

by Dr. Jamil Cherovee

### Child Psychology

I'm inclined to believe every Black parent in Amerika should read "The Developmental Psychology of the Black Child" by Amos N. Wilson. One of the major oppressive forces in American society is the myth of Black inferiority. Caucasoid supremacy is so pervasive a system that its victims often internalize these notions of inferiority and suffer from feelings of low self-esteem and self-hate.

Studies have shown that this negative self-image begins in the early years of life. The literature on child care, psychology and development is vast. Not surprisingly, it is addressed to the children of caucasoid Amerika a little, if any, mention is every made of the reality of growing up Black in a racist society. For the most part, the Black child experience is missing from the pages of works on child psychology. It is only within the recent years that works dealing specifically with the Black child have been published.

"The Black Child: A Parent Guide" by Phillis Harrison-Ross and Barbara Wyden; "Black Child Care" by James P. Comer and Alvin F. Poussaint; and "The Black Parents' Handbook" by Clara J. McLaughlin are three such books written by Black authors. The work reviewed, virtually ignored by the media, deserves a wide readership.

Black parents, educators, social workers, counselors, sociologists, psychologists and virtually anyone concerned with the future of the Black family will find

"The Developmental Psychology of the Black Child" by Amos N. Wilson an important, timely and provocative work. In the introduction the author states his aim to "examine areas of critical differences between Black and caucasian children" and formulates his thesis: "Far more so than any other ethnic child the shape of the Black child's intellect and personality is determined by the concept of race, race awareness, and race politics, economics, propaganda, etc., and psychology which fails to treat these items as major personality and mental variables is not adequate to deal with the Black child. This has been the greatest failure of American developmental, educational and clinical psychology."

In nine informative and stimulating chapters, Wilson demonstrates the validity of his thesis. A wide range of topics is discussed from the prenatal period to scholarly yet highly readable fashion. Innovative recommendations follow each chapter along with an excellent list of sources for further reading. The chapter on the prenatal period discusses the link between emotional stress on Black mothers and birth complications. Lack of adequate housing, economic problems, marital problems and overall deprivation tend to keep Black mothers in a state of chronic anxiety and have devastating effects on many Black births. Wilson points out

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