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# PORTLAND OBSERVER

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## GUEST EDITORIAL

Adrienne Weller

### Portland Needs A Strong Police Review Board

This Spring Portlanders all over the city voiced strong concern about police abuse, fear of reporting abuse to the police because of known incidents of retaliation and a demand for police review independent of the police in a series of community meetings organized by Police Internal Investigations Auditing Committee (PIIAC) members to gather citizen input. Public concern was accurate and timely.

Portlanders, especially people of color, women and poor are vulnerable to police abuse. They need, now more than ever with the resignations of the PIIAC Chair, John Ransom and Vice Chair, V. Jean Vessup, a strong community-controlled police review committee. It must be empowered to investigate all categories of police abuse, to determine and enforce corrective action and should replace the Internal Investigations Division, which is the police policing themselves and has proven itself incapable of fair handling of citizen complaints.

The toothless PIIAC was set up to fail. It is one of the weakest review boards in the nation, and had been even more weakened by appointees who are avowedly hostile to its function of police oversight and therefore unfit to serve and by the resignation of the above two members committed to police review, one of whom, Vessup, was the only Black representative on the committee.

The need for control of police is manifest locally and nationally by outrageous abuse. In Portland unarmed Black men, Lloyd Stevenson in 1985 and Solon Sanders in 1987, were killed by police with impunity. Portland's "Red Squad" uses tax dollars to spy on activist and radical groups that oppose U.S. government intervention in Central America. In Eugene, May, 1988, Eugene school teachers sued the city manager and the police for attacking their picket line and for false arrest during their 1987 teacher strike. In Seattle, March 1988, 2 unarmed Black men were shot by police and in response to community protests the mayor and police chief shifted the blame to the Black community who were demanding action on

drug problems. In N.Y. State in 1987 Black Men Against Crack, radical community activists who were exposing police drug dealings, were framed by police for gun possession.

One look at the bulk of complaints of abuse clearly exposes police bias. Complaints are made by the same people who fill the jails to overflowing—the poor, people of color and women. Without a board with powers to effect police department policy and correct abuse Portlanders are in danger from those who are supposed to protect them.

Portland City Council ignores the connection between a failing economy and an increase in crime. As the economy falters the police, backed by rightwing business interests, push only to control people. If city government is serious about eliminating crime they must create jobs and social services which people need to survive and not cut funds from essential programs to fund more police. Money for jails must be used to ease overcrowding and to create programs so those in jail have a chance to prosper when they are released. You do not need to be an expert on drugs and gangs to know, and even experts have written, that only good jobs with decent wages can replace the hopelessness that causes young men and women to waste their lives on the streets.

Without programs for human needs, and with increased call for police crackdowns, the result is not safer streets but police license and more deaths, harassment and brutality against the disadvantaged, the mentally ill, the unemployed, and those who exercise their right to protest and organize to improve an unequal status quo.

City Council, and specifically Commissioners Blumenauer and Bogle are responsible to prevent PIIAC from becoming another committee that whitewashes police misconduct. Jim Simpson and all others opposed to police review should be removed. A strong board, independent of the police department and immune to pressure from the mayor's office, should be established and staffed with members drawn from those most targeted by police bias—

# EDITORIAL / OPINION



Mary Hatwood Futrell  
President, NEA

## Our Democratic Mission

America's appetite for education reform is still robust, and I am delighted that it is. I am even more delighted that reform efforts are at last focusing on profound systemic change, on the comprehensive restructuring of schools. This is a pivotal development.

There is little doubt that America's commitment to a system of free, universal, equal education stamps our nation with uniqueness. In the United States, as in virtually no other country, education is the loom that weaves together our splendidly varied social tapestry. It is also democracy's deliverance. As Thomas Jefferson once put it, "Education is the anvil upon which democracy is forged." Jefferson understood that America's strength would depend on the development and subsequent contribution of all its people.

Jefferson's admonition is today more true than ever before. That is why—as we restructure education—we must grant center stage to the schools' most important element, the young Americans who inhabit them.

I offer this reflection as an antidote to reform discussions that too often ignore the fact that the clientele of our schools is changing. Many of the youngsters in school today—the product of the second largest wave of immigration in our nation's history—look and sound different from their predecessors.

For example, in 1978 alone, more than 650,000 Asians arrived in America. That immigration brought to our shores the largest non-white, non-Western, non-English speaking group ever to enter this country at one time.

That Asian influx is only the most dramatic example of a much larger pattern. By the year 2020, almost 40 percent of America's citizenry will be minorities. Our nation will be home to 47 million Hispanics, 44 million Blacks, 15 million Asians, and 3 million Native Americans.

We dare not underestimate the potential of this population. We dare not squander this national treasure.

No one has better made this point than Maryland Superintendent of Schools, David Hornbeck. "There was a time," says Hornbeck, "when the victim of our failure with any youngster was only that youngster. But today, we all become the victim. America can no longer afford, can no longer permit, throwaway or disposable children."

To those insightful words I would add only this. When we make minority children wait for an education, when we deny them equal opportunity, when we consider them too expensive to educate, we not only betray our democratic ideals—we sap America's human resources.

A restructured system of American education must never allow that to happen. Never.

## Religious Leaders Urges Reagan For Human Rights Intervention in South Africa

We have prayerfully observed the historic meeting between President Reagan and Secretary Gorbachev and their efforts to de-escalate the arms race and broaden channels of communication between the two nations. We are thankful for any movement toward these worthy goals and shall continue to pray for God's guidance and blessing in the waging of peace.

We also observed with appreciation the President's emphasis on human rights in the Soviet Union with particular concern for the right of dissent, and freedom of religion.

In view of the announced intent of the religious community in South Africa to challenge the government's restriction against dissent, and to launch a new offensive against apartheid, we respectfully urge the President, while there is global attention on human rights, precipitated by his pronouncements and meeting with dissidents in the Soviet Union, to call upon the South African government to respect the human rights of the Black majority and their white supporters in South Africa to peacefully protest and campaign against apartheid.

We respectfully remind the President that nowhere in the world is the violation of human rights and the right to peacefully protest more blatant and more brutal than South Africa.

We shall seek to meet with President Reagan, Vice President Bush and Secretary of State George Schultz to share our concerns about human rights, freedom of religion and the waging of peace—and offer our good offices to assist the President in developing and shaping our nation's policies in opposing apartheid and calling for protection of human rights in South Africa.



Founding President  
Martin Luther King, Jr.  
SCLC

Rev. Joseph Lowery, President - Southern Christian Leadership Conference; Rev. Patricia McClurg, President - National Council of Churches (N.Y.); Bishop Frederick Talbot - AME Church; Rabbi Alvin Sugarman - Reform Judaism; Bishop Joseph Coles - CME Church; Rev. E. J. Jester, President - Baptist Ministers Union; Rev. Clinton Marsh - Christian Council of Churches; Thandi Geobashe - American Friends Service Committee; Rev. James Costen, President - Interdenominational Theological Center; Rev. Anthony Motley - Baptist Ministers Conference; Rev. C. L. Henderson, Superintendent - United Methodist Church.

## Perspectives



### Blacks, Land And Family

Part I

by Professor McKinley Burt

Ten years ago I wrote an article for the Observer under a similar title. Since then there have been significant changes in some sectors of our economic situation. What we will describe here is a gradual loss or attrition of a people's most priceless heritage—THEIR LAND. The problem is rural as well as urban, for in modern America, RURAL IS BECOMING URBAN.

From 560,000 Black farmers in 1950, their number dropped to 57,000 in 1978. I incorporated particulars of this process into my "Black Urban Economics" class, taught at Portland State University, 1971-1978. I made it clear that in order to understand the precarious Black economic situation of today, it was necessary to research back to the period after the Civil War. Contrary to conventional wisdom, we have not "progressed as rapidly as would be expected in a hundred years of 'freedom'." The modicum of progress has been INSPITE OF thousands of exploitative games and economic thefts. Since these rip-offs are not cited in the texts of sociology, economics and history, I say that the conclusions reached therein are meaningless—and insulting.

Let me cite some examples. In the 'Sea Islands' off the coasts of South Carolina and Georgia, thousands of former slaves staked out an existence based upon

family farms, fishing and crafts. In this century, it was first the Federal Writer's Projects of the depression—and later, the intervention of World War II—which opened up to national view the existence of these rich lush, almost idyllic lands—A highly commercial view, in fact.

In the early 1970's National Geographic Magazine carried a series of picture essays on these lands, citing their economic significance. Lands which were purchased for 3-5 dollars per acre from parents of Blacks who had gone 'ashore' to acquire an 'education', and an urban life style—were now selling for over \$1,000 a front INCH! One issue of the magazine featured an ad for the "Hilton Head Resort"; a millionaire's playground for golf, tennis, boating and conventions; a half-billion dollar enterprise where, only two decades before, little Black children dug their toes into the sand. Think about it!

Another classic and commonly practiced process which has accounted for losses now in the billions may be termed a "Bohemia Spillway Caper." Here, sixty years ago, southwest of New Orleans, Louisiana, the Grand Prairie Levee District suddenly decided that large tracts of Black-owned land would be an excellent site for a spillway to protect New Orleans from floods. The Blacks were unceremoniously displaced from their lands, receiving only a pittance for their roots and heritage (if you're getting disturbed, think about home first).

I quote from the Christian Science Monitor for October 25, 1986: "The land that was taken is producing about \$3,000,000 annually in oil and gas revenue ... In 1984 the Louisiana Supreme Court handed down a decision upholding an order to RETURN THE LAND (To the Blacks). It is important to note that the Blacks had to organize legally and politically to achieve this victory—"The Fishermen and Concerned Citizens Association." Some situations can be retrieved, and there is a lesson here for Portland Blacks.

Continued Next Week



by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

## Civil Rights Journal Zambia

President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and the people of Zambia should be congratulated on their progress as an African nation committed to the independence and freedom of all of Africa. Kaunda led Zambia to independence from the British in 1964 and since that time he has as president become a role model for African statesmanship and leadership.

Despite severe economic difficulties at the time of independence and the continued acts of aggression by the racist government of South Africa to destabilize the southern Africa region, Zambia has been able to achieve remarkable political and economic progress. I recently visited Zambia as part of a tour of the frontline nations that border South Africa. I was very impressed with the sense of pride and accomplishment of the people and government of Zambia.

Zambia is a large nation that is greater in size than the combined area of the nations of France, Belgium, The Netherlands, and Switzerland. It has a population of approximately six million. Located in central southern Africa, it is bordered by Angola, Zaire, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi and Tanzania. Although Zambia is a completely land-locked nation, it is one of the most agriculturally rich nations on the continent. Zambia also has valuable minerals including copper.

The week that I spent in Lusaka, Zambia, the capital city, was quite a learning experience. First, I witnessed a truly modern African society. Lusaka is a metropolitan area with most of the conveniences one might expect to find in the capital city of a European nation. Yet this city has held on to its indigenous African culture and tradition. Secondly, although English is the language used by the majority of the people, traditional African languages are still being spoken with a sense of pride and self-determination. In fact one Zambian official and I talked to was quick to emphasize "As a developing nation we need the assistance of the world community to help in our development, yet we also know that we have something to offer the world community as an African nation."

Indeed Zambia has reached out to hundreds of thousands of fellow Africans who have come to Zambia seeking refuge from war situations in South Africa, Namibia, Angola, and Mozambique. I was even surprised to find a community of African Americans who are living in Zambia after being exiled from the United States. Zambia has also provided the sanctuary for the African National Congress to have its international headquarters. Zambia also provides a unique model for church/state relationships. The United Church of Zambia which has about one million members works very closely with the Zambian government on educational projects.

Humanism is the national philosophy of Zambia. It is the basis of all of the policies and programs of the government of Zambia under Kaunda's leadership. All the development effort in Zambia is based on Humanism. It is a way of life which emphasizes the importance of humanity as the center of all activity. It stresses human dignity, equality of all, the extended family, hard work and self reliance, resistance to exploitation and oppression, and the promotion of unity and justice. In the words of President Kaunda, "our revolution is a Humanist revolution. We have decided to wage a struggle against imperialism, neo-colonialism, fascism, and racism on the one hand; and hunger, poverty, ignorance, disease, crime, and exploitation on the other hand. This is what our revolution is all about."

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