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EDITORIAL COMMENTARY

by Professor McKinley Burt

I would like to comment on three of the 'Informational Memos' the Observer received last week.

1 From Congressman Les AuCoin, "Strong Medicine For South Africa's Ills". The Congressman reminds us that he has co-sponsored HR1580, a bill calling for the "near total trade embargo and immediate ban on ALL U.S. investment in South Africa" (introduced by Black Congressman Ron Dellums of California). The bill has the title, "Anti-Apartheid Act Amendments of 1988". Another co-sponsor is Oregon Congressman Peter DeFazio of Eugene.

Mr. AuCoin has very deftly made the case that such pallatives as President Regan's "constructive engagement", and similar "more carrot-less stick" gambits have not and will not work. "Limited sanctions imposed by the congress two years ago have been weakly enforced or simply ignored." A most telling point is made by the congressman, "New, tougher economic sanctions can be made to work so long as THE UNITED STATES DOES NOT WORK ALONE! We must invite South Africa's other major trading partners to join us in isolating the Apartheid economy...Great Britain, West Germany and Japan."

Now I have placed the term "invite" in bold because I do not believe that a mere invitation will persuade these free-wheeling entrepreneurs to cooperate in applying really tough sanctions against the despicable institution of Apartheid. It is my opinion that the United States could and should apply to those nations the ECONOMIC LEVERAGE which it is in a position to use—the dollar may have sunk in value, but it has not lost any of its allure for avaricious merchants of death. Thank you!

2 From Commissioner Dick Bogle, "Action! That's Why I Proposed 'A Gang Summit'." A problem here may be the choice of the term "summit". It may very well promote a negative public perception of the process which Mr. Bogle proposes to initiate. It is a word well overworked by mass-media in coverage of international politics, local politics, and everything else. It could mitigate against a possibly useful process.

It is not nit-picking, for, in a good dozen conversations regarding the commissioners proposal, a standard reply has been, "Oh no-not another SUMMIT!" In the commissioners favor is the fact that THERE IS NO SUCCESSFUL ACT TO FOLLOW. But on the other hand, Mr. Bogle echoes in his memo some of the very trepidations being voiced on the street, "Never have these bodies (organizations) worked as a single unit to solve a complex problem such as...criminal gangs; Never have all the key players met on the same field with one goal in mind." (City Council, County Commissioners, Sheriff, District Attorney, Governor and so on.)

Now, if there is "fear of flying", and there is "fear of rhetoric". I think that what Commissioner Bogle might do to allay public fears of another "Much To Do About Nothing" is to move beyond the polemics of the memo we received, "consolidate our knowledge...coordinate our actions..." Spell out specific moves which would constitute a rigid, realistic framework—a structure that would LOCK IN all those milling, disparate "bodies" in a structure which would prevent them from escaping their tax-paid responsibility to our community.

We know that you have the skills and experience to implement a workable process. Will you do it Mr. Bogle?

3 Top Principals In The Nation Meet. Let me comment on my Educational Adventure of the past week. I WENT IN SEARCH OF EXCELLENCE—AND I FOUND IT! I was a participant at the "Partners For Success; Business and Education" conference at Gearhart, Oregon, sponsored by the Albina Ministerial Alliance and the Tom Peters Group. For details see the comprehensive report in this same edition.

What I want everyone to know is how proud I was of the local prime movers in the affair—Mr. Ron Herndon, Director of the Child Care Division of the Alliance and Ms. Dia Norris, the Coordinator of Special Services. For "Ronnie", the originator of the concept, this must certainly have been a high point in his twenty-year career of commitment to Educational Excellence for Black children. To "Dia" and the never-flagging staff, I will say that it could never have happened without you.

When in the august company of over two-score of the most successful and highly recognized educators in the nation, one might expect to witness some personality conflicts—not the case! What I did see was an extraordinary exercise in the free exchange of information, viewpoints and resources. Many principals made firm dates to visit the operations of their peers. All sought the advice of the "Business Partners" who had been made an integral part of the conference.

As with the others, my personal benefit went far beyond the exhilarating learning experience; orders for my Black Inventors book—an invitation to write for the nation's largest publisher of educational magazines—invitations to lecture on African-American contributions to mathematics and technology. The conference did indeed "provide a forum for sharing techniques and strategies for reaching and teaching our children." (Ron Herndon).

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EDITORIAL /

To hell & back... Prison VS. Marian Reid



by Jamil Cherovee

women have been so uncommunicative, struck dumb by shock I suppose, that I can't blame anyone for assuming that the "difficulties" they experience are not threatening to life and dignity, as those experienced by their male counterparts. We will attempt to set the record straight and hopefully other Afrikan women in prisons will join us — en mass.

Black women experience just as much violence as men, but most of it is psychological/emotional, as even the prison officials are not able to dismiss regular beatings of women ... at this time. Actual physical violence is an omnipresent underlying threat. Our sisters behind bars do get their share of physical violence also, though it is a last resort. Women here were given a lot of "privileges" such as the right to wear their own clothing, purchase their own T.V., radio, tape; receive food from home, etc., that serves to divert attention from the FACT that their rights are being violated hourly. A Sister informed me, one of the warden's favorite tactics is to strip a woman of her rights when she enters the institution, then force her to earn them back metamorphosized into privileges (as if they were privileges). So thorough-going are the warden's various psychological stratagems many women lose sight of the fact that these alleged privileges are nothing but stolen rights being returned. The other so-called privileges serve as reinforcement of the socially induced tendency of women to accommodate themselves to blatant injustices rather than strive aggressively and implacably to eradicate the conditions, conditions under which these injustices flourish.

I was asked to visit Sister Marian Reid, an inmate at the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women at Jessup, Md. I want you to know, and believe me when I say so; the situation of incarcerated Afrikan Women in the State of Maryland would surprise you. I had my contact in New York City, check out several Women prisons on the east coast and in the South. (We compared notes), it's time to correct the awareness gap that exists in relation to the situation of Afrikan women in Amerikan prisons. Many Sisters/Brothers were under the impression that women's prisons are relatively "pleasant" places and that any problems they may have are trivial when compared to those of incarcerated men. I'm inclined to believe, Afrikan

Perspectives



by Professor McKinley Burt

Blacks, Land And Family Part IV, Conclusion

Let me close this series by presenting some additional models-programs that could have relevance to our own city. For instance, when I cited the large-scale efforts of the National Council of Negro Women in promoting Family Reunions and Cooperative Effort, I could have mentioned the outstanding contributions of other Black women's organizations.

In Cleveland, the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority not only runs a Job Corp program but, in 1984, paid cash for a 1.8 million headquarters building DESIGNED AND CONSTRUCTED BY BLACK ARCHITECTS. Another strong participant in the drive to stabilize the quality of life in Black neighborhoods has been the Delta Sigma Theta sorority. The Camden, New Jersey chapter has inaugurated the national organization's ADOPT-A-BUSINESS-PROGRAM by patronizing and "publicizing" a Black owned flower shop.

I will not neglect the "brothers" in these citations of critical contributions in this economic area. The Alpha Phi Alpha chapter in St. Louis "runs investment clubs for high school students, and administers a public housing project." There are many others, of course, like the Omega Psi Phi graduate chapter in Philadelphia with its important programs. Collectively, these endeavors represent an increasing awareness (of the fact) that if URBAN LAND is to be retained by Blacks, then, the economy of the neighborhoods

has to be strengthened—and that success requires the combined efforts of ALL our organizations. Here, in Portland, there is a vital need for this activity, and it is my hope that the models presented will prove to be a catalyst.

Certainly, there are "some" local examples of Black initiative in land development and improvement. Not too long ago a physician and partners built several apartment complexes in Northeast. When I was teaching at Portland State University the school hosted a westcoast seminar, "Forming Local Economic Development Corporations." I attended the conference, along with Ron Herndon—but while "my" manual on "Legal and Financial Guidelines" remains on the shelf, Mr. Herndon put the priceless information to work, and today we have the NORTH-EAST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION.

This thriving organization has made very important contributions to our neighborhoods, and to our "Innecity Economy" in general. These have included Apprenticeship Training in the Building Trades, the Construction of New Housing and the Improvement of Existing Stock, the Farmers Market, and the Nike Factory Outlet Store, which shares profits for future community development. Isn't it amazing how much community wealth a strong, motivating individual can accomplish with the cooperation of committed citizens? The problem is, we need a full-score more. Where are you? Especially that group of university graduates my generation financed; pay back time, boys and girls!

There you have it! I am sure that even before you read the distressing economic report, "One Third Of A Nation", you knew that Blacks were in deep trouble. And now you know as well that we are going to survive—but as I have said in this column before, "Lets get AHEAD OF THE GAME!"

PORTLAND OBSERVER

"The Eyes and Ears of the Community"
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OPINION

Yes, they have televisions, but they do not have up-dated, relevant legal resources. Carrying wardens to court is no guarantee that they will stop indulging in their various cruelties, so you can imagine the "fun" wardens have when even the possibility of having to explain/justify their modus operandi is absent.

When an Afrikan woman enters this prison, if she is independently intelligent, has an interest in political matters, a concern for the plight of her less fortunate inmates and enough personal charisma to compel others to "listen" to her — he keeps her in quarantine, even after she has been cleared by the medical department, while he "plots" his strategy to totally debilitate her and reduce her to a passive, vegetative zero. He will "summon" other inmates who profess to "know" the woman and dangle a few "rewards" under their noses in payment for their alleged insights. In most cases the accused has only a "speaking" acquaintance with these pawns, but they are so hungry for the "rewards" eager for attention, and overwhelmed by the presence of god (the Warden) that they will create information negative enough to please him and serve his purpose. The next move if she wasn't out on bail, is to contact the city or county jail where she awaited trial to get their "observations" and also to send for a "base file" if she has been incarcerated previously.

Once he has amassed all the "facts" he can procure, he calls his lackey "Black" and his right-hand euro-Amerikan police and proceeds to design a "program" that is restricted and tailored so as to cause the woman to experience the utmost psychological pressure and emotional anxiety. And she WILL function under these restrictions until HE decides her behavior warrants the return to her "rights." ANY TYPE of protest on her part is used to justify further punitive measures. This whole behavior modification process proceeds WITHOUT explanation to the women who are subjected to it. Indeed, the confusion generated by not knowing "why" is itself used as a weapon to further weaken the women psychologically.

If the woman being so subjected is doing short time (6 months to a year) she will NEVER have her rights returned. If it's longer, then after six months or so, he, after reading the observation reports of her behavior, will decide if she has earned her rights. If the woman has too much "whatever" to jump through hoops (if she refuses to act the way he wants her to act) she will be placed on lock in one of his solitary confinement areas until she becomes more of his conception of a woman — and less of her own. And people, I do mean you will remain in solitary as long as it takes to break your will. I talked with a sister who had been in solitary seventeen (17) months, sometimes without water to drink — no showers, no exercise, no commissary "privileges," not even clothing ... sitting on a thin mattress on a concrete floor BECAUSE SHE COULD NOT BE RECREATED. She absolutely refused to allow that animalistic creature to re-arrange, distort and manipulate elements of her mind, personality and character, simply because of his sick preconceptions.

The Sister said, "some days this "stimuli" was overpowering enough to cause her to consider "accommodating" this madness ... but something her mother used to say checked that impulse: "You may give out—but you will not give in!" We had the Sister transferred back to the city jail, for fear of her life. She should be released by this writing. I would like to urge our readers not to concentrate on one or two individuals to much. They are representatives of evil, no doubt, but they are not the evil itself. They need to be criticized, for sure, but it is much more important that we "critize" and eliminate the system that creates and sustains them.



CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

The Iranian Tragedy

The senseless destruction of an Iranian passenger airliner off the coast of Iran by the United States Navy is another tragic example of the failure of U.S. foreign policy in the Persian Gulf. President Reagan continues to assert that "the only U.S. interest in the Persian Gulf is peace." Yet, the increased military presence of the United States in this region has only added fuel to the fire of the war between Iran and Iraq.

The killing of 290 innocent civilians, many of them children, who were passengers on the Iranian aircraft does not appear to be enough to get the Reagan Administration to change its posture and involvement in this war. A nation cannot keep the peace by making war.

We remember in 1983 when the Soviet Union mistakenly shot down a Korean passenger airliner killing 269 civilians. President Reagan was quick to describe the Soviet Union as "an evil empire." Referring to the Korean airline tragedy, Reagan stated "What can we think of a regime that so badly trumpets its vision of peace and global disarmaments and yet so callously and quickly commits a terrorist act to sacrifice the lives of innocent human beings?"

If the Reagan presidency has a distinguishing characteristic it is its ability to point a blistering critical finger everywhere except at the White House.

The first sentence of Mr. Reagan's statement concerning the Iranian airliner was "I am saddened to report that it appears that in a proper defensive action the USS Vincennes this morning in the Persian Gulf, an Iranian airliner was shot down over the Strait of Hormuz." The key phrase "a proper defensive action" exposes the President's trigger-happy, shoot-first and think-later foreign policy.

Jesse Jackson was correct when he stated that this unnecessary tragedy was an example of "guided missiles and a misguided foreign policy." A staff report of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee recently warned: "There is mounting evidence that shipping in the Gulf is less safe now than before the U.S. naval buildup began and chances for mishaps are high." Senator Brock Adams of Washington told the New York Times that "We have no strategy in the Gulf ... what we have is a prescription for disaster."

The quest for peace anywhere in the world must be done within the context of securing justice and freedom. Rather than making the priority just to get oil out of the Persian Gulf at all costs, the priority of the United States should be to insure that justice and self-determination be guaranteed to all the nations of the region. The F-14 fighter jet that the U.S. Navy says it thought was attacking the USS Vincennes is an airplane that the Iranian Airforce originally got from the United States. If the United States continues to spread weapons of mass destruction all over the world, then sooner or later, some of these weapons will surely be used against the United States.

Every single human life is precious. The actions of the United States in the wake of the Iranian airline crisis exhibit more concern for protecting the image and the position of the U.S. military's presence in the Persian Gulf than taking appropriate measures to prevent future tragedies from occurring.

If peace is to come to this region the United States must go beyond admitting to "an understandable mistake." All U.S. military presence should be withdrawn from this region except those forces that would be a part of a United Nations peace keeping force. Only then will peace have a chance in the Persian Gulf.