

PORTLAND OBSERVER

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Guest Editorial

Parren Mitchell, Chairman

Minority Business Enterprise Legal Defense and Education Fund

We knew it was just a matter of time. We didn't think it would happen so quickly. But it has. Yet another legal challenge to minority business programs has reached the Supreme Court.

This time, it's the Michigan Road Builders Association that is trying to eliminate minority business opportunity programs from the face of the earth.

We cannot allow the right of minorities to compete fairly in the American marketplace to be taken away without a fight.

Soon, the U.S. Supreme Court will consider hearing arguments in the case of William G. Milliken, et al. v. Michigan Road Builders Association.

This is a case where an independent study revealed unfounded stereotypes and negative attitudes on the part of Michigan's procurement officials towards minority contractors.

This is a case where, in a state with a 14 percent minority population, minorities received less than one percent of state contract awards over a five-year period.

This is a case where the State of Michigan set a modest "good faith" goal to try and award one percent of its contract dollars to minorities, and failed to meet that goal!

This is a case where the state government found the only remaining viable remedy to be a gradually phased-in 7 percent set-aside goal for minority owned businesses and a 5 percent set-aside goal for women-owned businesses.

This is a case where, incredulously, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the factual findings of a federal district court, and found this compelling evidence to be "not probative" of discrimination.

This is a case where a conservative appellate court has gone so far as to deny the ability of a state to admit that it has discriminated against minority contractors and vendors!

It's no surprise that having seen no discrimination, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals saw no justification for Michigan's minority business program, and struck it down.

If the courts are unwilling to see discrimination that stares us in the face, the only possible outcome is consistent rejection of affirmative action remedies.

We cannot, must not, and will not permit this kind of judicial hocus-pocus to go unchallenged. You and I must do all that we can to convince the Supreme Court that racial discrimination in the marketplace is real, and deadly. It must be remedied.

The livelihood of thousands of minority businesses rests in the balance.

Already the U.S. Supreme Court is hearing our arguments in the case of Richmond v. J.A. Croson. In this important case,

the Court is deliberating about the constitutionality of minority business set-asides at the local levels.

Minority entrepreneurs in Richmond face their biggest challenge ever — the potential loss of their right to compete for a 30% share of the \$124 million dollars in city contracts, valued annually at some 37.2 million dollars!

Across the country, there are in excess of 160 minority business opportunity programs valued in the billions of dollars that have been placed in severe jeopardy by these two cases.

The Minority Business Enterprise Legal Defense and Education Fund is fully prepared to harness whatever resources are necessary to win these two cases and similar cases poised to go to the Supreme Court.

It is absolutely imperative that we fight discrimination against minorities in business as vigorously as we have fought for elimination of other forms of discrimination in housing, employment, and education.

Economic parity is the final phase of the civil rights struggle. Without full integration into the American marketplace, victims of racial discrimination will continue to be unable to purchase decent housing; they will continue to be disproportionately unemployed; they will continue to be unable to afford the rising costs of higher education.

That is why this struggle is one in which we cannot compromise. We've got to give our all to ensure that civil rights gained thus far are not rendered illusory by the ravages of economic discrimination.

We have already begun to coordinate other advocacy groups and legal organizations to assist us in presenting the Supreme Court with the fullest possible range of arguments on behalf of minority business interests.

We have been there in the past, and we will continue to be there in the future — with your support.

We were there most recently in Tennessee Asphalt Co. v. Farris where we successfully defended the constitutionality of the 10% goal for disadvantaged businesses in federal highway construction contracts — a program worth billions of dollars to minority businesses.

We were there in Stone v. Dole, again successfully defending the 10% goal for disadvantaged businesses contained in the Surface Transportation Assistance Act. As a result of our intervention, Judge Fox of the Federal District Court of North Carolina issued a final decision in Carpenter v. Dole upholding the constitutionality of this federal program as applied in North Carolina.

This Michigan case represents so much to so many. Together we can guarantee that our minority businesses will get their chance to participate in the American dream.

EDITORIAL / OPINION

"The Other Side"



by Harold C. Williams

For the last three weeks, Northeast Portland has received a great deal of attention from the news media. Some positive, however, I believe the intent has been to inform the broader community. But in that process, a negative picture has been presented ever so subtly that all of our youth, in particular the young Black men, are either on drugs, pushing drugs, or a part of some gang. This perception is very disturbing. For 85% or more of Black young men are hard working, committed to a positive future, and have pride in themselves. Why then does 15% or less, who present a negative picture, become the image that is painted of all young Black men in our community?

Let's look deeper at what is going on in our community. The gang issue is real and most be dealt with. Drugs is a real issue that must be dealt with, but the real agenda is to use the gangs and drugs to disfranchise the low and middle income persons in our community by claiming that the total community is unsafe, thereby giving some the reason to

board up our properties and have them condemned and a few 'well-healed' opportunists swoop over the property and displace senior citizens and long-time residents by changing the zoning to commercial and industrial and thereby causing the tax structure in the community to become higher which makes it prohibitive for many middle income persons to hold onto their property. One has only to look at the trend nationally of "urban removal" and see the displacement of Black people who happen to live on land that is valuable and which is easily accessible to all of the major amenities that a city provides. So if the main agenda is to take inner-Northeast Portland out of the hands of some long-time Black residents, then lets make that clear and stop castrating young Black men by painting them as hoodlums, dopeheads, and anything else that one can think of that is negative.

There are problems, many problems, that young Black men have to face such as unemployment, higher education opportunities. Drugs are a problem as well and we must not ignore it. Let's put drugs and gangs in their proper perspective, one problem among many, but it must not overshadow the hopes and dreams of the majority of the beautiful young Black men in our community. For the real issue is not gangs and drugs, but the reclaiming of the land in Northeast Portland by a few opportunists. Must we stand aside and allow the dream and the hopes of future for our young Black men be destroyed because a few opportunists have another agenda in mind at the expense of our most valuable resource: the young, the strong, beautiful Black men.



Along the Color Line

Dr. Manning Marable

The American political system is unique in that it gives the electorate "selections without choices." The Republican convention in New Orleans was a dreary event, entertaining only in the sense that it showed that thousands of people can dwell in political unreality, espousing dogmatic and dangerous slogans rather than serious issues, marching lock-step into the abyss of fear, war and intolerance. The Democrats are only superior due to the presence of progressive forces within its ranks, but even the Rainbow's stunning victories last spring do not negate the intellectual and political poverty of the bulk of the Democratic Party's centrist and rightwing leaders. When the two parties compete, personalities rather than issues generally dominate. Seldom is the average voter given an opportunity to make a viable choice between candidates who symbolize fundamentally distinct policy alternatives.

A good example of this electoral dilemma is the current presidential contest. Michael Dukakis and George Bush have had very different political careers and experiences in public life. Dukakis is a three-term governor of an eastern state, who has had considerable administrative experience. Bush is a former Congressman, ambassador, CIA head, etc., a political chameleon whose identification with moderate Republicanism declined as his narrow ambitions for higher office soared. Dukakis's record on civil rights does not equal that of Walter Mondale, and Bush's record is at best pathetic. But given the conditions facing Black Americans and other voters who are working people, farmers, racial minorities, the elderly, and individuals on welfare or other government programs, the selection between Bush and Dukakis is easy. Unquestionably, Dukakis is the "better candidate". Without fear of contradiction, we can easily predict that more than 90 percent of the Black electorate which casts ballots this November will go for Dukakis over Bush. The Hispanic vote for Dukakis, excluding the Cuban electorate, should be at least 75 percent. The unemployed will go for Dukakis by 65 to 75 percent; union household voters should support Dukakis by roughly 60 percent.

We can be fairly accurate in these predictions, because of the previous electoral trends in 1976,

1980, and 1984, as well as current opinion polls among segments of the voting age population. We also know, conversely, that at least three-quarters of all Born-Again Christian evangelicals will go for Bush; that 70 percent of all voters earning over \$100,000 annually will support the Republican national ticket; and that a substantial majority of homeowners and property owners will endorse Bush. In effect, these voters are not selecting one candidate over another. They are voting their social class interests as best as they can perceive them, within the limited and contradictory framework of America's electoral system.

Bush and Dukakis are opponents, only in that the victory of one will mean political oblivion for the other. But beyond personality battles resides the heart of politics, the question of power. And whether Bush or Dukakis win this coming November, the issue of empowering the poor, minorities, working women, the unemployed and others who experience racism, economic oppression and discrimination is not on the national agenda.

Indeed, there are as many similarities between the major parties' candidates as there are differences. Both endorse Reagan's foreign policy of "neo-detente" with the Soviets, although Bush has been forced for tactical reasons to temporarily shelve his real beliefs on this question. Both favor an East-West, confrontational approach to international policy, rather than espousing a North-South agenda which would focus on uprooting poverty, hunger and neocolonialism within the Third World. Both favor limitations on federal intervention to resolve social and economic problems domestically, although Dukakis would undoubtedly be more "humane" within a limited fiscal framework. Both support the goals of budget management and administrative efficiency; both oppose radical steps to eliminate unemployment and poverty through massive government intervention. So we need to be very clear about what is at stake in the selection of Dukakis vs. Bush. There is clearly a difference between the two candidates. But that difference will not culminate in any fundamentally different policy alternatives in many areas of domestic and foreign affairs which impact Blacks and working people.

Perspectives

Washing Dirty Linen In Public



by Professor McKinley Burt

I promised to introduce another innovative style of enterprise, so here is one with a distinctive flair in the application of technology to the rather ordinary. We preface by pointing out that most successful businesses are launched by those with related on-the-job experience.

In 1958, I was the Inventory Control Accountant for what was then the largest Mail Order Discount House on the West Coast. After supervising 14 people in purchasing and shipping for several years, I could quote from memory the manufacturer's prices on all major brands of appliances, jewelry, furs, sporting goods, silverware, clothing, cameras and the like. Naturally, I frequently speculated, "How can I use this experience in MY OWN ENTERPRISE?"

At the time my neighbor was laid off from his job as a refrigeration mechanic, taking temporary employment in LAUNDROMAT REPAIR. The same week I noticed that a large apartment complex under construction nearby was undergoing a major alteration — to allow for the inclusion of a LAUNDROMAT IN THE BASEMENT. Obviously, it would have been better to have ANTICIPATED this money-making

convenience, than to make expensive adjustments during construction.

An idea began to gel and, leaving through the 'New Building Permits' section of The Daily Journal of Commerce, it became quite clear that one could introduce the in-house laundromat concept BEFORE construction began. I approached my mechanic neighbor with the idea and, with a carefully designed presentation package, made the rounds of prospects with very favorable results: "Industrial Cleaning Services will provide you with a COMPLETE TURNKEY PACKAGE on your site-coincorporated washers and dryers, boiler, and consumer amenities." Note that OUR-ON-THE-JOB EXPERIENCE permitted accurate pricing of all elements from equipment to taking back a two-year maintenance contract.

This mode of enterprise should prove an excellent model for any reader wishing to extend this approach to other fields. The only state-up expenses were a license, insurance, a truck and a good set of maintenance tools, everything else was contracted out: The 'Ajax Boiler Company and Central Plumbers' for installation, Bank of America financing of the contract secured from the owners — which permitted the equipment purchases from the distributors without a cash outlay. The office was in my den, and the workshop in my neighbors basement.

We made six successful installations before being crowded out by the 'big boys.' However our total investment was less than the cost of a good USED CADILLAC!

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL



by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

South Africa's Latest Ban

The sight of white plainclothes police officers awkwardly carrying large, round, movie film containers under their arms outside of movie houses in Cape Town South Africa is reminiscent of both the terror and extremist actions of Hitler's Nazi regime.

The racist apartheid regime of South Africa recently banned and seized all copies of the movie, "Cry Freedom." The police commissioner of Cape Town, General Hennie de Witt, stated that the movie had "a propagandistic theme" and that the movie violated South Africa's two-year-old state of emergency.

"Cry Freedom" depicts the life and tragic death of Steve Biko. Biko was a forceful and energetic foe of apartheid. He was beaten to death by South African police while in their custody. This movie also portrayed the journalistic activism of Donald Woods, a white South African newspaperman who became a Biko supporter.

One of the realities that South Africa is too blind to see is that you cannot ban the truth or con-

fiscate the determination of a people to be free. This latest ban by the Botha government in South Africa is indicative of the sense of moral and political weakness which permeates all of the fabric of present day apartheid.

Banning "Cry Freedom" is only another senseless and desperate act by South Africa. These repressive acts will not succeed in preventing a remembrance of Steve Biko. The martyrs of the struggle for liberation and freedom in South Africa and throughout the region of southern Africa are remembered for their sacrifices and leadership. Ironically, this latest move by South Africa will only ensure that the world community will never forget Steve Biko and the nameless, countless other sisters and brothers who have given their lives in the cause of freedom.

The African National Congress, the liberation movement of South Africa, deserves our support. The people of South Africa and the people of Angola, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana will need our resolute solidarity and commitment.