

# EDITORIAL / OPINION

## GUEST EDITORIAL: Elderly In Jeopardy

by John E. Jacob

If any group today can be called the "forgotten Americans" it is the Black elderly.

They are in double jeopardy—facing racism and ageism. And elderly Black women are in triple jeopardy—adding sexism to their burdens.

A third of older blacks and two out of five older black women are poor—triple the white rate. Older black families have a third less income than older whites.

They are three times as likely to be unemployed, and they are far less likely than whites to own their own homes. Their life expectancy is lower. Their housing conditions are worse.

Most blacks don't have corporate pensions, stocks, or dividends. And about 40 percent of older blacks get all of their retirement income from Supplemental Security Income.

That means a priority item on the black agenda has to be a change in SSI so that its benefit levels are at least equal to the federal poverty line.

That's the quickest and surest way to alleviate poverty among older black people, and it's a long over-due step that can assure at least minimum levels of decency toward those most in need.

For many older blacks, the retirement years are simply a continuation of the hardship and disadvantage that dogged them all their lives.

If there is anything we have learned it is that whenever something bad is coming down the line, it happens to black people first.

Americans can ignore the plight of the black elderly then, only at their own peril. For ageism—if allowed to go unchecked—will mean once again sharing with blacks the negatives of discrimination and disadvantage.

We can see that happening today as older white workers are being forced out of the job market just as surely as blacks have always been.

Back in 1950 almost half of all men over 65 worked—today less than a fifth are in the labor force. Back then, 87 percent of men between the ages of 55 and 64 worked—today that's down to about 69 percent.

Those figures can be explained in part by the postwar prosperity that enabled many people to live on their retirement income and even to retire early.

But much of it is due to policies based on two myths: first, that older workers can no longer produce, and, second, that their jobs are needed by younger workers.

That first myth reflects ageism, and results in the hidden unemployment that comes when older workers are laid off and when corporate restructuring targets older workers for early retirement.

The segregation of older Americans out of the workplace is reinforced by mandatory retirement, and by social security and pension regulations that penalize working.

Over the next dozen years the number of Americans over 65 will increase by six million. But the 18-29 age group will decrease by 8.5 million.

Our economy faces a labor shortage—not a surplus. By forcing older workers out of the labor force we are reducing America's productive capacity and its ability to compete in the world's markets.

In the coming years, older workers will assume a more important place in our economy. We've got to have serious national programs to train and retrain them for the jobs of the future.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

From An Admirer That Enjoys Your Professionalism  
Dear Garland,

Met you briefly about a year ago, all of that to say I saw the play Sunday. It was Great. Enjoy your column. Thank you for tangibly improving the quality of life in Portland.

Sincerely,  
Ronnie Herndon

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## The Other Side A Step Forward



by Harold Williams

The Portland Convention Center is on its way. The first phase of this positive image for Portland is just about completed. Sept. 8, Hoffman/Marmolejo were awarded the contract for the second phase of the convention center with a bid of \$46,755,000. Hansel Phelps had a bid of \$46,590,000 which was lower than Hoffman/Marmolejo's bid; however Hansel Phelps did not meet its minority participation goals. Hoffman met the goal with a joint venture with Marmolejo. Also, Hoffman went a step further in making it public through its CEO, Cecil Drinkward, that they would go beyond the 10% minority participation goals insuring that a broader spectrum of racial diversity would be participating on the convention center project.

Hoffman Construction Company and Cecil Drinkward are to be commended for this positive step, for this will ensure that Blacks will play an important role in the construction of the convention center. This will also lend to

positive opportunities that are much needed to overshadow the negative image that our community has been tagged with for decades.

What better way to address the issues of gangs and drugs, with a true defense of opportunity and employment. When Hoffman Construction moved forward with this project with the total involvement of minorities and particularly Blacks this will send a statement to the broader construction industry that the time has come to involve the total racial community and the success and progress of the City of Portland and the State of Oregon.

The proof is in the pudding and the eating of it. We will know in a few weeks just how tasty the pudding will be that Hoffman Construction serves by the number of Blacks and other minorities that will be seen on the project. We congratulate a positive move by Hoffman Construction Company and the black community look forward to not being disappointed.

## Along the Color Line



Dr. Manning Marable

Since last month's Republican National convention, Michael Dukakis has almost disappeared from the national media. Virtually all of the political attention has focused on the Republican Party nominees. First, there was the surprise of George Bush's selection for his Vice Presidential running mate. Indiana Senator Dan Quayle has no clout within the U.S. Congress; his Reaganite policy positions are popular with the ultraright wing of the GOP, but he has no national or even regional constituency. His selection on the ticket did not win Bush anything in the electoral college, because Indiana would have voted Republican regardless of the vice presidential nominee.

Bush's selection of this photogenic, political lightweight represented his own deep insecurities, a burning desire to be perceived as the "Senior Partner" on the GOP national ticket. That surely wouldn't have been the case with Robert Dole as the vice presidential selection. Bush has been in Reagan's shadow for so many years, that he was determined to establish his own credentials; the best way to do so was to choose a politician without any clout or substance whatsoever, except rightwing rhetoric. Even before the party left its convention in New Orleans, the news broke concerning the controversy about Quayle's entry into the Indiana National Guard in order to avoid serving in Vietnam. The flap caused the rightwing considerable embarrassment; but the GOP stuck with their chickenhawk, and resorted to the old Nixonian technique of attacking the press for its investigative reporting on their beleaguered candidate.

Bush's recent successes obscured his long-term liabilities. Because in reality, Dukakis ought to win this election, albeit narrowly. Largely undiscussed within the media is a fundamental problem which confronts Bush, which may deny him victory this November. His problem is that the major of hardline, conservative Republicans, the true believers in the Reaganite cause, are still uneasy about Bush as their candidate; a substantial minority of key rightwingers would actually rather see Dukakis win over Bush.

The Republican party is divided into several major and minor political factions, each guided by a distinct political orientation and philosophy, its own sets of leaders, and its separate public policy

agenda. The smallest and most insignificant tendency inside the GOP is the moderate to liberal faction, represented by Lowell Weicker of Connecticut. Far larger are the "Moderate Conservatives," which represent the majority of Republicans in Congress, and are led by Bush and men like Robert Dole, Howard Baker, Gerald Ford, and Bush campaign manager James Baker. They all share a belief in fiscal conservatism, but are centrist on many social policy issues. They favor limited government intervention to address economic and social problems, and favor tax increases to cut federal deficits.

The Moderate Conservatives are chiefly opposed by the "Reaganites," who oppose any form of federal intervention into the economy; they support hardline foreign policies, and oppose tax hike of any sort. Reaganites favor supply side economics, best represented by the ideas of Republican Congressman Jack Kemp. Finally, there is the faction of the Evangelical Rightwing, led by Pat Robertson and Southern-based politicians. The Religious Right is more preoccupied with social policy questions, such as abortion rights and prayer in the schools, than any other issues. It is more dangerous than any other GOP faction, because it seeks to impose its own narrow version of private morality upon the public. The Religious Right is well-organized and despite its recent loss in public prestige due to the scandals of several televangelists, it should regroup behind a new candidate for president in 1992.

Bush's immediate problem is of course getting elected. But if he is successful in defeating Dukakis, he will confront a far more difficult dilemma—presiding over an unruly political coalition of political and social forces which disagree about a number of fundamental issues. A Bush Presidency would elevate a number of Moderate Conservatives into high office—James Baker would undoubtedly be given the Secretary of State post, Richard L. Thornburgh would keep the Justice Department, and moderate New Jersey Governor Thomas Kean might be selected for a cabinet post. The Reaganites and the Religious Right would declare war, not unlike their struggles against Gerald Ford's administration a decade ago. The problem with George is that even if he wins this November, he will not be able to govern effectively.

## CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL Vote For Racial Justice



by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

As we approach the day of the presidential election of 1988, Tuesday, Nov. 8, we are now able to see the opportunity for millions of citizens of the United States to make a clear choice for the future leadership and direction of the nation. The latest polls indicate that the contest between Michael Dukakis and George Bush is just about even. Yet, for millions of African-Americans, Latino-Americans, Asian-Americans, Native Americans and progressive Anglo-Americans the choice is a question of social progress versus degeneration. It is a question of racial justice versus injustice. It is a question of peace versus war.

One of the glaring contradictions of the Reagan-Bush years has been the dramatic increase in acts of racially motivated violence across the nation. There are many political and social scientists who have concluded that the character of the Reagan Administration has directly contributed to a national atmosphere where racial violence has become more tolerable and accepted.

The Commission for Racial Justice along with other incidence of racially motivated violence in the United States during the last eight years. We found that in every section of the nation there has been a gigantic increase in acts of racist violence primarily perpetrated against racial and ethnic communities. One

of the dangers of the current political campaign is the false assumption by some members of the African-American and other racial and ethnic communities that they "really do not have anything to vote for this year." The truth is this will be the single most important presidential election of the century. The future of the world, particularly the Third World, is at stake.

When one travels outside of the United States today, particularly in Africa, Latin America, or other Third World regions, the first question that is raised is the importance of the U.S. presidential election this year. We should vote in record numbers as an act of responsibility and citizenship. We should also vote in record numbers as an act of international solidarity with the oppressed of this world in the interest of justice, liberation and peace.

I for one, personally, am committed to voting for racial justice by voting against the Reagan-Bush legacy of institutionalized racism at home and abroad. It is not institutionalized racism at home and abroad. It is not necessary to list the long litany of racist acts by the current administration. I only wish to remind all citizens that we all have something to vote for this year. I intend to vote for the cause of peace in the world and for the cause of liberation. I intend to vote for racial justice. I therefore, intend to vote for Michael Dukakis.

## Perspectives You Heard It Here First!



by Professor McKinley Burt

Two weeks ago, my front page article in this newspaper (Business As Usual?) speculated that there may be a deliberate effort to depress property values in the Northeast Community. I cited foreign investors and sure enough they are in town—in force according to many articles in the major press. Most recently we are informed that a Japanese syndicate has purchased 49% of the real estate of a local college.

In a different sphere, but equally important to our well being, is a growing concern over an escalating presence of computers in the workplace. The traumatic economic situation of Blacks is not being relieved by this 'cutting edge' of technology. On the contrary, not only are millions of jobs being eliminated—being replaced by 'high tech' positions, they say—but the major losses are in precisely those areas where, traditionally, marginally educated or trained Blacks could find employment.

We have this from the Knight-Ridder News Service: "That's the implicit goal of automation. To take skills away from the workers, to make them easier to train and replace ... a peek under the golden arches. There are no numbers on McDonald's cash registers, just little pictures of burgers, Big Macs and fries ... work schedules are formulated by computers ... There's no such thing as a McDonald's manager—The Computer runs the store." But the highly paid computer program designer is not in the store—try a Los Angeles high rise.

Well now, weren't we told of all the millions of new service jobs (minimum wage) that would be created by the computer revolution? And that would be the employment solution for Black youth, and for women? Some of

us will believe anything—but what we should believe is that unless Black social and employment agencies, among other institutions, escalate their understanding of the real world there will be even more devastating setbacks.

I am distressed that we do not find those in highly concentrated areas of traditional Black employment (Post Office, etc.) taking independent action to analyze their industry in light of the technological processes and innovations going on. Why can't they pool their resources and hire independent consultants to formulate meaningful retraining, not to mention workplace adjustments. Too many of us still wait for ol massa to come down from the big house and redecorate the slave cabins.

These, also, are some of the reasons I always based my teaching of computers upon an initial introduction to not only the basic systems which comprise a computer, but also an introduction to the systems to which the computer would be applied. This type of preparation—along with relevant mathematics—will enable a worker to either advance beyond a dead end entry level job, or to opt for a position elsewhere. But, in any case he must always be aware of the changing technology around him. "Watch as well as pray!"

**FORMER PRIME MINISTER NAKASONE SAYS:  
Blacks Are Dumb!  
DO YOU AGREE?  
HAVE YOU BOUGHT A TOYOTA CAR OR SONY T.V. LATELY?**