

EDITORIAL / OPINION

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

Supreme Racism

by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

The recent ruling by the Supreme Court of the United States against state and municipal minority set-aside programs is the latest in a series of anti-civil rights rulings by the Reagan-dominated court. Thus, another blow to affirmative action has been dealt.

The Supreme Court is the highest judicial body in the nation and its rulings have far-reaching implications. Theoretically, this court is supposed to display the greatest amount of objectivity and fairness in the quest to ensure justice for all citizens of the nation. Former President Reagan was successful, however, in stacking the court with persons who are ideologically opposed to equal justice when it comes to the rights and privileges of African-Americans and other racial and ethnic citizens of the United States. In other words, the recent rulings by the Supreme Court give evidence that the majority of the current justices on the Supreme Court do not have the ability to prevent their own racial prejudices from influencing their decisions on matters of racial justice.

In writing the dissenting opinion, Justice Thurgood Marshall stated, "... today's decision marks a deliberate and giant step backward in this Court's affirmative action jurisprudence." Justice Marshall added that the Court's "unnecessary pronouncements will inevitably discourage or prevent governmental entities, particularly

this approach to affirmative action in the letting of contracts.

This ruling should not go unchallenged. Martin Luther King, Jr. taught us 25 years ago that it is immoral to obey an unjust law. We believe it would be equally immoral to accept this latest ruling of the Supreme Court without issuing a call to continue to demand affirmative action. Justice Marshall has taken exception to this ruling and we have a responsibility to do no less. When the Supreme Court engages in racism it is up to the people to become involved in the necessary legislative processes to rectify judicial injustice.

states and localities, from acting to rectify the scourge of past discrimination. This is the harsh reality of the majority's decision, but it is not the Constitution's command."

With the unemployment rate in the African-American community soaring at an unprecedented level, the action of the Supreme Court will now cause thousands of others in racial and ethnic communities to become unemployed. Minority set-aside programs were designed originally to ensure that a fair percentage of contracts, particularly government contracts, would be given to minority vendors and contractors. Of course, minority contractors were able to provide thousands of newly-created jobs as a result of

VANTAGE POINT

The Mis-Education Of The Negro

by Ron Daniels

In the sixties and seventies the phrase was "oreo." It meant Black on the outside, but white on the inside. In an era of intense, even militant Black consciousness this concept of the oreo (named after the cookie) was used to depict Black people who thought and acted like white people, or Black people who behaved in such a way as to promote white interests to the detriment of Black people. This idea of dual identity or internal conflict over identity and direction is not a new phenomenon in the history of our people here in America.

W.E.B. Dubois spoke of a kind of "twoness," a double sided consciousness, one black, the other white tugging inside the minds of all of us, struggling for our allegiance. Fanon, author of the "WRETCHED OF THE EARTH" also published a book entitled BLACK SKINS, WHITE MASKS. Another author in the sixties wrote a work entitled BLACK ANGLO-SAXONS. More than any other group of African people in the diaspora, African-Americans have been plagued by the psychological and cultural tensions and conflicts which arise from double consciousness or racial ambivalence.

Carter G. Woodson, one of our most distinguished historians, and the founder of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, was convinced that the dilemma of racial consciousness and identity was not an accident. Woodson, who is the father of Black History Month, pointed to what he believed to be the deliberate "mis-education of the Negro" as the source of the African-Americans agony over identity and direction. Carter G. Woodson put forth the notion that—HE WHO CONTROLS THE MIND HAS NOTHING TO FEAR FROM THE BODY.

People who receive a white education and internalize white culture were bound to think like and act like white people. Hence, Woodson saw a Eurocentric or white oriented American

education as a control mechanism which hampered the ability of African-Americans to think Black, and act Black. This mis-education rendered Black people helpless and harmless in terms of Black people unifying and acting decisively around their own self-interest. As long as we were chocolate coated white people, Woodson reasoned, the white oppressor had nothing to fear from his client. The white man's ice would always be colder!

The corrective Carter G. Woodson prescribed was a liberal dose of the study of African-American history and the Black experience. Black people who had been afflicted by white education needed to be re-educated. At the heart of the re-education process must be a love of self and African people born of the knowledge, appreciation and respect for African culture and history.

It was to deal with the "oreo" complex that the idea of Black History Month was developed. Given the brutal and dehumanizing experiences of slavery, and the ongoing impact of white racism, cultural aggression, and white oriented education, African-Americans can never get enough Black history and culture. Our churches, civic and fraternal associations, and social clubs should all be consciously integrating our history and culture into their programs. And of course we need to teach African-American history and culture at home.

African art, music, folklore and literature should be mainstays of our educational diet. The projection of African-American heroes and heroines, and a regular recitation of the historical contribution of Africans to world civilization can be a great stimulant for young aspiring Black minds. Surrounded by a Euro-American ocean of whiteness, there can be no such thing as being TOO BLACK. Our history, culture and identity should serve as a basis for group cohesion, and the collective pursuit of an African-American agenda for moral, social, economic and political advancement.

Along The Color Line

Ron Brown's Victory: A Political Defeat In Disguise?

by Dr. Manning Marable

The apparent victory of Ronald H. Brown as the first Black national chairperson of the Democratic Party has been taken by some observers as a "victory" for Jesse Jackson and the liberal-left wing of the party. But upon closer examination, this individual victory in the short term may present a defeat in disguise for the Rainbow Coalition.

Ron Brown has a long track record in liberal Democratic circles. In the 1970s, he worked for the National Urban League. For a time, he was an aide to Massachusetts Senator Edward M. Kennedy. His major break occurred in the 1988 presidential election, as the pivotal broker and coordinator in Jesse Jackson's campaign. Brown was "credited" by the press and party hierarchs for acting as a moderating influence upon the charismatic candidate. He succeeded in getting Jackson to come to terms with Dukakis. Mainstream liberals and centrists were impressed, as Brown created a moderate political image for himself not unlike that of Philadelphia Congress person Bill Gray, who remains the leading Black contender for the vice presidency in 1992.

One by one, Brown's white opponents for the Democratic Party's chair dropped out. Former Representative James Jones of Oklahoma, a conservative Democrat who continued his challenge, warned that Brown, "if he wins, will have to make some moves to the center and disassociate himself from (liberal) perceptions." The first real test for Brown will come in Chicago, where Black mayor Eugene Sawyer is running behind Richard Daley for the Democratic mayoral nomination. If Daley wins, as seems probable at this point, he'll be challenged by independent candidate Tim Evans, who represents the reform, progressive tradition of Harold Washington. It was Washington's historic victory as Chicago's first Black mayor in 1983 which catapulted the movement for a progressive, insurgent challenge by a Black presidential candidate within the Democratic primaries. Conversely, Daley is the product of a corrupt and racist political machine.

The Democratic Party bosses will demand that Brown back Daley, if he

emerges as the official candidate. But the political interests of the African-American community, many Hispanics and progressives call for an Evans victory. Brown might be called upon to provide the cover of Black and liberal legitimacy for Daley.

Complicating matters ever further is the ambiguous role of Jesse Jackson in recent days. Jackson publicly endorsed Sawyer in the Democratic primary, despite the fact that the Black incumbent had been pushed into office by anti-Washington, anti-Black city alderman. In one Chicago Sun-times poll late last year, Evans was supported by 52 percent of all African-Americans surveyed vs. only 14 percent for Sawyer. Overwhelmingly, Black voters know that Evans, not Sawyer, represents a fight-back strategy which will increase Black and progressive power. A correct strategy would be to bypass the Democratic primaries, building a progressive political network which can be represented by a broad-based electoral ticket outside of the Democrats' control and manipulation.

The issues which progressives are confronting in Chicago's upcoming mayoral race must be faced at a national level as well. If we simply place our collective aspirations upon Jesse's presidential bid in 1992, we will continue to exist on the margins of political power in this country. White, mainstream Democrats learned several lessons last year. They understand that the Black electorate represents the cutting edge of any liberal-left politics, which was symbolized by the Rainbow.

To destabilize progressive and Black politics, leadership from the African-American community must be absorbed or coopted into the mainstream. In one sense, that is why Bill Gray has become such a media superstar in the past year; it's also the reason for Ron Brown's emergence. Tragically, most white Democrats accept the view that Dukakis and Mondale lost because they were too far "left," and that Blacks, feminist and liberals must take a back seat in the Democratic Party. To operationalize this strategy, a group of Blacks and other minorities are necessary in leadership roles. Jackson doesn't seem to comprehend what's at stake.

Perspectives



How To 'Use' Black History

Part I

by Professor McKinley Burt

How, indeed, 'do' you use Black history--and for what purposes? If you have been following the news lately, you have been made very much aware of several geographical places: The Kush Mountains, through which the Russian armies are passing as they leave Afghanistan, and the Mardi Gras Festivals in New Orleans and in Rio Janeiro, Brazil.

In recent articles I have pointed out that KUSH ("Cush" in the Bible) was the ancient name of Ethiopia, indicating an early African presence in this area between Russia and India (As if a casual glance at many of the 'Afghans' wouldn't yield the same information). Now I was outraged when the television media described the Mardi Gras festivals as having their roots in ancient ceremonies celebrating the 'Greek' god, Hermes. You do remember my quote on January 26, "It was not until the gods of Egypt were accepted by the Greeks, that there appears to be an ceremony that could be called dramatic." (Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. I, p. 131, 1958).

Hermes, the African god Thoth, "the inventor of letters, numbers and philosophy," was often referred to as Hermes Trismegistus (thrice great) by the Greeks who studied at the Egyptian Temple Schools. The Hermetic philosophies permeated the entirety of Western culture--from The Christian church to Masonic ritual, and from European literature to Mozart's Opera, The Magic Flute. See Peter Tompkins book, The Magic of the Obelisks.

An obelisk is an African architectural icon (of religious significance) found in the form of a single stone shaft of great height. Though there are many in the United States and throughout the world, the best known example in this country is the WASHINGTON MONUMENT! New York, London, Berlin, Paris and Rome have many of these symbols of Hermetic

philosophy that were carried out from Africa by the shipload.

The Mardi Gras festivals which honor Hermes continue a 4,000 year-old African religious/philosophical theme in the tradition of 'The Procession to Edfu' in honor of the African goddess Hathor--The Greeks called her Aphrodite. Here, downstream on the Nile, she was to become, in this yearly ceremony, the bride of Horus. The African god whose eye Thomas Jefferson placed above the Great Pyramid in his design of the Great Seal of the United States. See the reverse side of a one dollar bill (Jefferson forgot to tell anyone other than his fellow Masons that this act was in honor of Hermetic tradition and the supporting African philosophy of Maat--Truth and Justice. Perhaps it would have appeared hypocritical for a slave holder).

I can see specific uses for this type of Black history--other than the general revitalization of spirit and energy that occur when a race is reintroduced to a glorious past that has been hidden/stolen. Why should it be wrong for Blacks to recall and honor their traditions and heroes? If many European churches (who know their sources) can portray the Virgin Mary and Christ as Black, then, why can't African-American churches do the same? If so many of the African rituals and traditions from the Festivals of Edfu to "divine revelation as the source of truth" to the Pope who set the 'Birthday of Christ' to coincide with that of Osiris, the African god of vegetation--were incorporated into the Christian church, then why can't African-Americans acknowledge their contributions? Are they still slaves? Are we free, or not?

Next week I will introduce some new Black Inventors, and suggestions how we may use their accomplishments to motivate our youth--and to intervene in the destructive social processes occurring in our communities.

THE OTHER SIDE

Why We Should Smile

by Harold Williams

In these times a smile costs nothing but gives much. It enriches those who receive, without making poorer those who give. It takes but a moment, but the memory of it sometimes lasts forever. No one is so rich or mighty that he can get along without it, and no one is so poor but that he can be made rich by it.

A smile creates happiness in the house, fosters goodwill in business, and is the countersign of friendship. It brings rest to the weary, cheer to the discouraged, sunshine to the sad, and is nature's best antidote for trouble. Yet it cannot be bought, begged, borrowed, or stolen, for it is something that is of no value to anyone until it is given away.

Some people are too tired to give a smile. Give them one of yours, as no one needs a smile so much as he who has none to give. So smile we need the joy that it gives!

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To Be Equal

Court Strikes At Affirmative Action

by John E. Jacob

Some 190 cities and counties and 36 states have affirmative minority contracting programs. They are now in peril because the Supreme Court, the Reagan Administration's legacy to the nation, has struck down one of the most sweeping of those local laws.

And while the Court's action is directed at state and local contract awards, it sends a serious signal that other forms of affirmative action by local governments are in danger of being struck down.

The Court didn't ban setaside programs for minority contractors outright. But it did make it a lot harder for local governments. They'll have to demonstrate that such programs are the clear result of previous discrimination, and they may have to show how other corrective actions that stop short of outright setasides won't work.

The Court based its verdict on the notion that discrimination was not proved, therefore governments can't remedy it. But how much proof is necessary to show that Black contractors in the Richmond, Virginia construction business--the case in question--faced discrimination?

Richmond was the capital of the Confederacy, had rigid segregation until the 1960s, and its history of public and private discrimination is richly documented, even in earlier court cases, as Justice Thurgood Marshall pointed out in his dissent.

Justice Marshall eloquently reveals the shallowness of the Court's logic and the disastrous effects its decision may have.

"Today's decision marks a deliberate and giant step backward in ... affirmative action jurisprudence. Cynical of one municipality's attempt to

redress the effects of past racial discrimination in a particular industry, the majority launched a grapeshot attack on race conscious remedies in general. The majority's unnecessary pronouncements will inevitable discourage or prevent governmental entities ... from acting to rectify the scourge of past discrimination. This is the harsh reality of the majority's decision, but it is not the Constitution's command."

The Court's majority took refuge behind ideological barriers to come up with a sweeping opinion that attempts to rewrite recent history.

Affirmative action and minority setasides were instituted because minorities had been excluded from certain sectors, including construction contracting, and affirmative action was needed to redress that unconstitutional situation.

Black businessmen have been denied contracts, refused loans, and squeezed out of competition. Government setaside contract requirements are an effective way to remedy that. They serve a valid public purpose in expanding minority business opportunities, and a constitutional purpose in remedying illegal and unconstitutional past discrimination.

The Court could have found fault with the Richmond statute and issued a narrow ruling applying only to the case in question. Instead, it issued a sweeping decision that hurts affirmative action and makes it harder for minority business people to survive.

All of this is done under the cloak of racial neutrality and removing race as a consideration--a position that ignores and distorts the reality of past racism and present-day discrimination. This decision is shameful.

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