

EDITORIAL / OPINION

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL-- RIPPING OFF HOMELESS CHILDREN

by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

What kind of person or group would deliberately "rip-off" a benefit for homeless children. Well, it now appears that the answer to this question can be found in New York City?

Recently, the Commission for Racial Justice of the United Church of Christ sponsored a "Rap Artists' Benefit for Project Hotel," at the Beacon Theater located in Manhattan. This project is being sponsored by the Commission to provide summer camp opportunities, after-school tutorial and college-prep counselling as well as other programs for some of the thousands of homeless children who live in New York's infamous "welfare hotels". During the last two years, the Commission has been very successful in soliciting the support of African American "rap" artists to aid Project Hotel through performances at the Apollo Theatre located in Harlem.

To our shock and dismay the event at the Beacon Theater exposed the "behind-the-scenes" contradictions involved in the promotion and management of rap artists. Specifically, Rush Productions, a Manhattan-based rap artists' management firm was retained by the Commission for Racial Justice to provide rap artists for the Beacon Theater concert. Rush Productions manages some of the top African American rap artists, for example Run D.M.C., Public Enemy, Jazzy Jeff and Fresh Prince, De La Soul, and Slick Rick. Although the Commission had a good working relationship with Rush Productions prior to the Beacon Theater concert, it soon became clear that Mr. Lyor Cohen is now the key decision-maker at Rush Productions and his influence concerning this concert made it impossible for the benefit to be successful.

It is ironic that Rush Productions is owned by Mr. Russell Simmons, an African American who has struggled hard to provide management services for the lucrative rap artists' industry. It is evident, however, that Mr. Lyor Cohen has been making decisions that are not in keeping with the principle of constituency accountability nor responsible business ethics. The New York Daily News published a very critical article about this concert stating, "Calling Friday's rap benefit concert for Project Hotel a 'rip-off' would be polite." Not only were promises broken concerning the financial arrangements, but also the concert was plagued with poor management due to Mr. Cohen's negative interventions. It appeared that Mr. Cohen was only interested in getting money directly in his pocket at the expense of the reputation of Slick Rick and De La Soul two of the groups who attempted to perform under great duress. It also appeared that Mr. Cohen had no interest or real concern for the plight of the homeless children whom the benefit was supposed to give aid.

One moral of this drama is that African Americans who are fortunate enough to own companies and businesses, should not allow the management of these companies to be put into hands of greedy, avaricious hustlers. It remains to be seen whether or not Rush Productions or Mr. Cohen will "repent" for their sin. And it remains to be seen whether or not Mr. Russell Simmons is really in charge of Rush Productions!

DYMALLY SECURES PASSAGE OF FOREIGN SERVICE INTERNSHIP

Washington, D.C. -- During its consideration of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, the House Foreign Affairs Committee voted unanimously to approve H.R. 1488, a bill introduced by Representative Mervyn M. Dymally (D-CA), which would establish a Foreign Service Internship Program within the U.S. Department of State.

The first internship, which will be held in Washington, D.C. at the Department of State, will focus on the study of International Relations, the functions of the Department of State and other agencies that use the Foreign Service system, and the nature of the Foreign Service.

RETURN TO THE SOURCE THE MISSION OF THE YOUNG GENERATION

by Ron Daniels

President of the Institute for Community Organization and Development in Youngstown, Ohio

Amilcar Cabral, the brilliant theoretician and leader of the struggle for independence in Guinea-Bissau in West Africa, argued that students, intellectuals, and the middle class were key to sparking the struggle for change among oppressed people. Cabral observed that the petite bourgeoisie had three principal tendencies: some tend to "wanabe" like the rulers and oppressors and take the side of the oppressor against the masses; another sector, perhaps, the majority simply vacillate, are indecisive and tend to play it safe; but another sector chooses to commit "class suicide," by deciding to "return to the source" to merge their interests with that of the masses of the oppressed workers, peasants, and the poor to fight for fundamental change. Though the masses are decisive in ultimately making change, this return to the source or return to the people, ones own people, is a crucial element in crystallizing the struggle for reform or revolution.

The Howard University student revolt is illustrative of this tendency of some among the student - intellectual - middle class sector to sacrifice self-interest in order to struggle for a change in the condition of disadvantaged and oppressed people. Cabral pointed out that it is only natural for those who are relatively well off to aspire for more, particularly within a greed oriented and materialist society. To risk comfort, security and the future in the interest of those who are less well off than you is unusual; its like committing suicide - class suicide! But it is precisely this risk, this act of committing class suicide which is required to move an oppressed people to liberate themselves. As Frederick Douglass put it "power conceded nothing without a demand, it never has and it never will".

The students at Howard, like their predecessors in the sixties, risk suspension, expulsion, arrest and the sacrifice of their own education in the interests of the collective good of African-Americans students and the national African-American community. They refused to accept the insult to Black people that Lee Atwater's appointment to the Howard University Board of Trustees symbolized. But beyond the Atwater affair, the students were challenging the administration to cease and desist in having the university function as a virtual neo-colony of the government and more particularly the Reagan-Bush administrations. The university, they protested must be more sensitive to the needs of students and to the African-American community.

In making these demands, the Howard students also threw down the gauntlet to the African-American Nation. Black people should provide a greater share of the resources, of the money to aid in the development of predominantly Black colleges and universities thereby enabling these institutions to more freely and effectively serve the interests of the principal constituency they were created to serve - African-Americans. This challenge is well put, for he who pays the piper picks the tune!

In the sixties, African-American students who engaged in the "movement" had a campus and a community agenda. On campus there was constant pressure for open admission and substantial student aid programs to enable disadvantaged Black students to gain access to higher education. Students also fought to create African-American

Studies Programs as vehicles to provide both an ideology and the skills to equip students to provide service to their communities. Anti-Vietnam protests, the anti-apartheid movement, and the ongoing struggle against racism also emerged as key focal points of Black student activism. In the community African-American students joined picket lines, boycotts and protest demonstrations around issues of concern to the local community or national Black community. They created alternative educational institutions, liberation academies and youth programs. They organized co-ops and community economic development projects, and spread Afro-centric ideology and culture in the community. The movement moved in the sixties because students in massive numbers returned to the source.

Hopefully the Howard student revolt marks a turning point which will inspire large numbers of the young generation to commit itself to return to the community to serve the people, to aid, assist and lead the oppressed National African-American in the quest to achieve liberation.

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Dear Editor:

Allow me to commend the PORTLAND OBSERVER for the recent article, "Minority Business Enterprise in Oregon, Part V: A Curious Entrepreneurial Advocacy," by Stephen F. McPherson (March 23, 1989).

As former staff to State Representative Margaret L. Carter (District 18), I can attest to the struggle to bring public attention to minority contracting issues. Since 1985, State Representative Margaret Carter has worked endless hours to bring reform and focus to the Oregon MBE/WBE Program.

You are providing a much needed public service in raising community issues before all Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Jon Christenson

Portland Observer

The article by John E. Jacob was highly offensive to all African Americans who love babies.

Abortion is simply killing our babies before they are born. No one who has seen these infants (as in the enclosed photo) can deny that they are human beings. Because it's the law of this land does not make it right. Segregation was the law at one time too.

Make no mistake about it, this law was designed to help eliminate African American babies to keep our members down while the abortion industry gets rich. Abortionists don't care about poor women, they want money.

I have been receiving the Observer for a year and have yet to see articles on prolife. There are many African Americans in this movement but none are reported on. I challenge the Observer to start giving us both sides of the issue.

G. Morris
6555 SW 207 ave.
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P.S. How about some west side coverage of A.A.

TO BE EQUAL HIKE THE MINIMUM WAGE

by
John E. Jacob

Every year Congress considers raising the minimum wage, and every year the notion is put back in storage. But this year looks different. One big reason is the Bush Administration's support for a minimum wage hike, accompanied by a so-called lower "training wage" for new, inexperienced workers.

That's a welcome shift from the previous Administration's firm opposition to any increase in a minimum wage so low that a full-time worker at the legal minimum earns a yearly income below the poverty level.

Behind the new consensus for raising the minimum wage is a new regard for fairness. The principle that work is the route to independence and self-respect is undermined when wages are too low to provide much of either. The minimum wage was established back in 1938 in the belief that work should be adequately rewarded. Since then, the minimum has usually been set at about half of the average hourly earnings of non-supervisory workers. But now, the minimum of \$3.35 an hour has sunk to only about a third of those average earnings. The last increase came in 1981, and inflation has reduced the buying power of the minimum wage far below the point of fairness.

That's led to a second reason behind the new consensus: a higher minimum wage will have less effect on employment.

Opponents of a higher minimum always claimed that raising the wage floor would mean losing jobs, since employers would not hire unskilled workers at a higher minimum. But now, many states have their own minimum wage laws, set higher than the federal level. And many employers routinely pay new hires a dollar or more above the federal minimum.

That puts into question the need for a lower training wage. Small employers are already exempted in the current law, and no one has made a convincing case that jobs would actually be lost.

But there is a strong case for a higher minimum to help the working poor. Opponents of a higher minimum say that it just helps teenagers pick up extra money after school. But over a fourth of all minimum-wage workers are heads of households. And most of those needed another wage earner or public aid to survive.

Half of all heads of poor families work at least part-time. Almost one million work full-time, year-round. And about three million children live in poor families in which one of the parents is a full-time worker. So a higher minimum is long overdue, and a lower "training wage" would be a mistake -- it's a way to perpetuate poverty for workers.

As a last resort -- and only if it is politically necessary to secure a higher minimum wage -- the basic minimum should be raised across the board and, to determine its effect on new entrants to the labor force, a lower training wage could be tested in a handful of selected cities.

After a year or two, the results would be studied and reported to the Congress. If indeed that lower training wage proved to expand job opportunities, it could be extended nationwide. If not, there would be no need for it.

That's better than imposing a two-tier minimum wage right off the bat, and it's better than losing this opportunity to bring fairness and higher wages to the working poor.

by McKinley Burt

PERSPECTIVES URBAN INNOVATIONS FROM AFRICA; PART II

There are many, many examples of African architecture and urban design in the city of Portland (and most others in the world). In the past two weeks I have presented some basic contributions. This includes last week's citation of Portland's Ladd's Addition as incorporating basic elements of the Washington, D.C. designs of African-American surveyor Benjamin Banneker.

The Africans pioneered the concept of building in stone (Ethiopia, Nubia and Egypt), and invented both the functional and decorative 'column' as supporting structures. "The main branch of the United States National Bank of Oregon, 321 SW Sixth Avenue, is considered by architectural historians to be Portland's finest example of classical architecture" says The Oregonian for April 29, 1989, p. U2. And, well, it might be for the interior and exterior photographs feature the same style magnificent columns as seen in National Geographic articles or in the "Time-Life Series: Egypt", or in Baroca's, "Monuments of Civilization: Egypt". Also, take a look at the lobby of the Dekum Building, 519 SW Third Avenue. The style is unmistakable.

The Scientific American magazine for December, 1985 tells it all in an article titled, "The Construction Plans for the Temple of Apollo...in order to achieve such perfection, the Greeks used techniques that were not significantly different from those employed earlier by the Egyptian architects; and that were used later by the Romans and still later by builders in the middle Ages." Of course, the Greeks didn't just follow the best model in the world, they followed the only model in the world. Check out the Blackstone Apartments on the

Portland State University Campus, and see pictures of the old 'Egyptian Theatre'. Look about! Africa is all around you.

Much of the theology and most of the icons of the Christian Church are documented as African in origin. Examine the doors of the AME Zion Church at North Vancouver Avenue and Skidmore; then, reflect upon the 23rd Psalms, verse 4, "...thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." If you saw the King Tut Exhibit in Seattle, you know that this pair of religious icons originated in Africa as the Crook and Flail of the beneficent god of harvest, Osiris (and portrayed today by the establishment as the ubiquitous "Jolly Green Giant").

From "Never at Rest": Biography of Isaac Newton (p. 346) we have -- "The tabernacle of 'Moses' and the two temples of Solomon and Ezekiel, Newton decided, had all been built to the same plan". Here, again, we have Newton searching for the exact value of that original and basic African constant of mensuration, the cubit --necessary to his adoption of the Great Pyramid for the geodesic standards of his 'Theory of Universal Gravitation'.

In 1837, astronomer John Greaves, who actually went to Africa and personally measured the Pyramid for Newton, included in his publications Newton's first book, "Dissertation Upon the Sacred Cubit of the Jews and the Cubit of Several Nations". But, what we see to have happened (as did Newton) is that much was lost in translation when the Hebrews of the Exodus brought out what astronomy and mathematics they had learned in Africa. This is understandable, as we have Anta Diop stating in his "African Origin of Civilization", pp. 5-9, "Having entered Egypt as 70 shepherds grouped in 12 patriarchal families, nomads without industry or culture, the Jewish people left there 400 years later, 600,000 strong--after acquiring from it (Africa) all the elements of its future traditions, including monotheism".

Nehemiah, a Rabbi (150 A.D.), was the author of "Mishnat-ha-Middet", the earliest Hebrew Geometry known to us--and he too made things difficult

for Newton, arriving at a strained version of the Old Testament verse (I Kings, VII:23) that yielded a value of Pi; at 3 1/7 in the Tabernacle Structure. The actual value, however, leads to the contradiction that Pi equals 3. "Also, he made a molten sea ten cubits from brim to brim, round in compass, and five cubits the height thereof; and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about."

They say that "when in doubt, go to the source". Over 2,000 years before this feeble attempt to establish the exact value of Pi, the Africans had already accomplished the task by incorporating into the great stonewall of the Temple of Karnak a value of 3.1416, correct to four decimal places. This is to be seen yet today, indelible in its stone-testimony to genius. This temple is located on the Nile at the site of the ancient city of Thebes which was extolled by the Greek poet and oral historian, Homer, as "Many-Gated Thebes (100), the most wondrous spectacle in the world". Of the "Seven Wonders of the Ancient World", four were located in Africa: Thebes, the Pyramids, the Colossi, and the Labyrinths. Thebes was a state capitol a thousand years before Rome.

The monarchy at Thebes lasted a phenomenal 1,000 years (2,160-1,100 B.C.) and from here at various times scores of Ethiopian Kings and Queens ruled the known world as far away as the Euphrates, Palestine, Syria and Asia (see, pp. 126, etc., Dubois, "The World And Africa"). In the temple here (as in King Tut's Tomb), we find another African icon that left with the Exodus: The Ark of the Covenant; EXODUS XXV, an oblong chest of Shittim (acaci wood), 2 1/2 cubits long, by 1 1/2 broad and deep". Smith in his "Dictionary of the Bible" and Wilkinson in "Ancient Egypt" cite their illustrations of the Ark, "Egyptian". The Africans not only used similar ships for explorations and military conquests, but built replicas 'for transport of the souls of the dead'.