

# EDITORIAL / OPINION

## REMEMBERING JIM DUNN

by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

One of the things that we have emphasized over the years here at Civil Rights Journal is the importance of taking the time to appropriately pay tribute to the fallen heroes and heroines of the on-going freedom struggle in this nation and throughout the world. James Norman Dunn, Ph.D., Co-founder and Director of the Peoples Institute for Survival and Beyond, died at the age of 53 of cancer at his home in New Orleans on February 17, 1989. Dr. Dunn spent his life in the struggle for human justice. As a poet, teacher and singer, Jim Dunn was always in the front lines of civil rights marches, community empowerment efforts and student sit-ins of the 1960's, 1970's and the 1980's.

Jim Dunn was a native of Urbana, Ohio. Brother Jim, as he was affectionately called by thousands of persons throughout the southern region of the United States, was committed to building a multiracial society. He was an activist as well as a scholar who learned the important lessons of effective grassroots community organizing. After receiving his Master's degree in Social Work from Columbia University in 1970 and his doctoral degree from Union Graduate School in 1978, Dr. Dunn taught sociology and Black Studies for 11 years at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. From 1981 until he died, Dr. Dunn conducted Peoples Institute workshops on "undoing racism." Many academic institutions and community organizations honored him for his distinguished leadership.

Jim Dunn was also a gifted musician and songwriter. We know the important role that music has played and will continue to play in inspiring a new generation of committed activists and leaders. Dunn published several articles, essays and songs for the movement, including *New Wine and New Wineskins*, a book of original poetry, and "It's Time to Sing Some New Songs," a taped collection of his music.

For four long years, Brother Jim battled courageously with cancer. Yet, at every moment Jim kept his focus on challenging the increasing dangers of racism. At a recent meeting and training session in Mississippi sponsored by the Peoples Institute for Survival and Beyond, many of Jim's friends gathered to celebrate his life and living legacy.

It is our hope that not only something of the memory of the significance of the life of Jim Dunn will be maintained for many years to come, but also that the model of courage and leadership of his life will be lived throughout our communities. One concrete way to remember Jim Dunn is to support the Jim Dunn Educational Scholarship Fund c/o Peoples Institute, 1444 N. Johnson St., New Orleans LA 70116. Our struggle has been blessed by Jim's contribution, may his spirit continue to live in the effective way we stand up against the forces of racism.

## TO BE EQUAL

### FOCUS ON KIDS

by John E. Jacob

There's an emerging consensus in favor of greater federal investments in America's children. It's powered by several factors:

First, too many kids are growing up poor, with the greater likelihood of underachieving at school and winding up without skills or education. As Marion Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund, writes in the National Urban League's State of Black America report:

"Today, compared to 1980, black children are now more likely to be born into poverty, lack early parental care, have a single mother, have an unemployed parent, be unemployed themselves as teenagers, and not go to college..."

Second, business leaders are concerned that demographic changes mean the economy will be dependent on a greater proportion of the work force that's drawn from today's minority and disadvantaged groups.

They understand that unless those kids are equipped with opportunities that prepare them for a productive place in this changing economy, everybody's living standards are going to fall.

Third, after years of heavy cuts in vital child care, nutrition and health programs, the public is demanding that government play a more creative role than just saying no to progressive solutions. Polls show consistent public support for day care and other programs that give poor kids a better chance in life.

Finally, it's beginning to dawn on many people that investing a dollar in children's programs today saves more dollars down the road. Every dollar spent on a quality day care program like

Head Start, for example, saves about \$6 in public expenditures and social costs later on.

President Bush has talked about child centered federal initiatives such as better medical coverage for low income families, tax credits to cover child care costs, and expanded child nutrition programs. And congressional efforts to establish affordable day care programs have had bipartisan backing.

One such bill, the Act for Better Child Care (ABC) would help low and moderate income families pay for child care, expand the availability of child care programs, establish minimum standards for such programs, and empower parents to make the right choices for their kids.

Today, the majority of children from families with higher incomes attend preschool programs. But only about a third of kids from poor families are enrolled in such programs.

That means the children who need such training most are shut out, largely because their parents can't afford to pay the bills, while the kids who already start out with advantages get an extra head start as well.

So many child-centered agenda has to ensure access to preschool learning experiences and to vastly improved schools serving disadvantaged and minority kids.

Health programs targeted to poor families are also needed. About a third of the 36 million people not covered by public or private health insurance are children, and one of every four African American children is totally without such health insurance.

In the 1980's, government disinvested in its children and therefore, in the nation's future. In the 1990's, it will have to increase its investments in human resources and now is the time to lay the foundations for that effort.

## Perspectives

### BLACK GENIUS, WHITE COVER

by McKinley Burt

Take away what is African in America (or the world) and what do we have left? Not much, as we have seen here. An enthusiastic reader response to this series on documented African origins and innovations suggests that I have pretty well demonstrated that civilization did not begin with the Greeks, Romans, or any other Europeans.

Just as significant as technology has been the African and African-American

cultural contributions in the areas of music and literature. In particular, the fairly recent ripoff in the field of popular music provides a model that this generation can use in an examination of how ancient history has been warped to exclude Blacks. We will take a look at the "Cross Over" and "White Cover" techniques used by American's recording industry. Neither student, teacher or the public will have any difficulty determining that a "white cover" - the Greeks - also has been used to obscure the contribution of the ancient African;

## THE BLACK AGENDA AND INDEPENDENT POLITICS

Dr. Lenora Fulani

Along with other concerned African Americans, I have been invited to take part in the African American Summit that is being held in New Orleans on the weekend of April 21. In his letter of invitation the general chairman of the AFRICAN AMERICAN SUMMIT '89, former Gary, Indiana mayor Richard Hatcher--the first African American to be elected mayor of a major American city--explained that "an African American Agenda for the next four years and on out to the year 2000, which transcends party and partisan considerations, will be developed at this meeting." The Summit, he continued, "will be open to all African Americans of every political persuasion, religious organization all economic levels ages, philosophies and walks of life."

I am very pleased to be taking part in the Summit and in particular to have the opportunity to address the issue of "Options for the African American Community" the panel on which I will be a speaker. My participation guarantees that the 220,000 Americans--mainly African Americans--who voted for me as an independent Presidential candidate last year, and the hundreds of thousands more who support a Black-led, multi-racial independent party in America, will be represented in this next national dialogue on the Black Agenda, a dialogue that has been taking place in our community for nearly a generation now.

In 1972 the National Black Political Convention met in Gary, Indiana. In his explosive keynote address Mayor Hatcher, the convention co-chair, handed down a passionate indictment of both the major parties.

"No political party which represents the interests of America's giant corporations, rather than the urgent needs of the people, may enlist Black political power in its support...Hereafter, every political party must make up its mind. It cannot represent both the corporations and the people. As the party chooses, so shall we then choose the party."

"We say to the two Americans political parties: This is their last clear chance; they have had too many already. These are not idle threats...The choice is theirs...Those of us still committed to a political solution may then cross the Rubicon and form a third political movement."

But despite those words, the convention ultimately rejected the option of building an independent party; instead the delegates opted for the strategy of increasing the number of Black elected officials, focusing their efforts on the Democratic Party.

Jesse Jackson's run for the Presidency in 1984, and again in 1988, renewed a passionate debate on whether and how our struggle for empowerment could be successful solely within the framework of the Democratic Party. The insistence on the part of the white pro-corporate hierarchy of the Democratic Party that Jesse repudiate Minister Louis Farrakhan during the 1984 campaign heightened the feeling in our communities that being in the Democratic Party meant allowing white America to dictate to us who our leaders could be. And 1988, when Jackson was denied a place on the Democratic ticket even though he finished the primary season in a strong second place, further underscored the extent to which the Democratic Party was intent upon denying us a share of political power commensurate with our numbers and our loyalty.

The week of the Democratic National Convention, at which Jackson was unceremoniously dumped by Michael Dukakis in favor of the pro-contra Texas land grabber Lloyd Bentsen, was a flashpoint of national debate within the African American community. Minister Farrakhan held a forum on the Black Agenda at the Wheat Street Baptist Church in Atlanta attended by 4,000 people. He urged Jackson to be a "champ" and not a "chump" by standing up to the racism of the Democrats.

Minister Farrakhan invited me to address the crowd; they cheered when I said that Jesse was a brilliant leader but had led us to the wrong place. Minister Farrakhan gave his support to my independent candidacy, sparking a heated debate within the Muslim community over whether or not it should be involved in electoral politics and whether or not that involvement should include independent candidates.

In answering the argument that the Democrats were better for the Black community than the Republicans, Minister Farrakhan said, "You have no right to support something that you have given so much to and get so little from. You have no right to continue to support it simply because you feel you suffered under Mr. Bush and maybe you might do better under Mr. Dukaki. Who said so? That's like voting for Lucifer or Satan, you catch hell either way you go."

I look forward to presenting the independent option at the AFRICAN AMERICAN SUMMIT '89. I look forward to intensifying the discussions within political, religious, civic and grassroots circles over which route we must take to our empowerment and the realization of the Black Agenda.

nothing changes but the name of the game.

But, first, let us take a fascinating and humorous look into our music, a bit of continuity in the African genre (mode)...

**A. The Blues As Written 4000 Years Ago** (Love poem translated by S. Schott from the Papyri Harris, Beatty and Turin)

I have not seen my beloved for seven days

I am a prey to listlessness

My heart has become heavy

When the physicians come to me

Their remedies do not satisfy me,

The magicians are helpless

My sickness cannot be discovered

But if they say "look, there she is",

Then I am restored to life.

**B. The Blues According To Say, B.B. King:**

Ain't seen my baby for seven long days,

The doctor can't help me or mend my ways.

The voodoo man ain't got no spell

He can't begin to make me well.

Now back at the ranch we find that Patti Page and Georgia Gibbs were the "White Cover" for popular recordings originated by Black female vocalists like Ruth Brown or Aretha Franklin, Pat Boone and Elvis Presley covered Charles Brown, Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Chubby Checker, Fats Domino, and James Brown. And only the Beatles acknowledged an African origin. The giant recording affiliates of

the T.V. networks and movie studios with their tremendous financial resources were able to convert Black Rythm and Blues into white Rock and Roll. Before long Ruth Brown was waiting on tables for a living.

Those who have further interest should read Black author, George Nelson, *The Death of Rythm and Blues*. Mr. Nelson is editor of Black Music for Billboard Magazine, the bible of the entertainment industry. What we see to have happened is that the Black recording companies lost the cash flow, contracts and other resources that not only made it possible to pay their artists well - but also made it possible for them to hire hundreds of Blacks in high-technology jobs not open to them in white-owned industry. The few tokens hired by the big operators under their Affirmative Action programs were not much of a tradeoff. And the union barriers are yet to be breached.

Now, we should be able to appreciate how it came to be in respect to the omissions of Black History, ancient or modern - in the words of Bill Cosby, *Lost, Strayed or Stolen*. "The white establishment has in place a set of controls that dictate how Blacks shall be heard, seen portrayed, taught or remembered. In history or art, they insist in the tone of an Eleventh Commandment, "Thou shalt be covered."

Next week we shall explore the depth and beauty of African literature, ancient and modern - and we shall un-cover the brothers and sisters.

## Dr. Manning Marable Along The Color Line

"Is Education a Human Right?"

During last year's presidential campaign, Republican candidate George Bush vowed to become the "Education President." Federal expenditures and initiatives to help resolve the crisis in our schools would be increased. Of course, since Bush moved into the White House, we've learned that the President's rhetoric on education has little correlation with his budget proposals.

Education -- at the elementary and secondary school levels, in colleges and professional schools -- is the fundamental basis for individual and group development. Without education, one cannot acquire concrete skills or a mastery of information necessary to accomplish even the most simple tasks. Without a college degree or advanced training in a technical program, it is extremely difficult to advance economically. Increasingly, African-Americans are losing the battle for educational opportunity and equality.

One indicator is the falling number of Black doctoral degrees which are being granted. Between 1977 and 1987, for example, the total number of students who received doctorates in American universities increased by about 500, to 32,278 students. In 1977, the number of African-Americans receiving doctorates was 1,116. By 1980, the year Reagan was elected, the number of Black doctorates had fallen slightly, to 1,032 students. The Reagan administration initiated budget cuts in education, replacing government grants for loans, and deliberately hiked unemployment for low income people, making it difficult to afford tuition at professional schools. By 1983, the number of Black doctorates dropped to 921; four years later, only 765 Black doctorates were awarded. Meanwhile, by contrast, the number of white women receiving doctorates during the same ten year period rose 36 percent.

A similar story exists for the overall enrollment of African-Americans in institutions of higher education. In 1980, 1,107,000 Black women and men were enrolled in a college or post-secondary institution. Six years later, that figure had declined slightly, down to 1,081,000 students. However, since the population base for Blacks of college age (18 to 26 years) had increased significantly during these years, the decline was actually far greater than it appeared, when considered as a percentage of that population group. By contrast, white college enrollment between 1976 to 1986 increased by nearly one million students -- almost the total number of all African-Americans currently enrolled.

In the elementary and secondary schools, we're also losing the battle for educational equality. According to the California Postsecondary Education Commission Director's Report of December, 1985, for example, Black children in the California public schools have terrible prospects for advancement. The 1988 Black kindergarten enrollment in California was approximately 35,290 students. Of this number, the Director's Report estimates that by the first years of the twenty first century, only 17,645 Black students from this 1988 kindergarten class, roughly 50 percent, will graduate from high schools. About 6,800 will enter community colleges, approximately 20 percent; 1,235 are projected to enter campuses of the California State University system; and another 706 will enroll in the University of California, only 2 percent of that kindergarten class. How many will graduate? Only 363 Black students will ultimately receive college diplomas from California State University or the University of California, 1 percent of the original group.

Is education a human right, or simply a commodity which is bought and sold? Financial aid grants at most universities have been reduced from one third to two thirds since 1975. Most Black youth who manage to get out high school are tracked into community colleges, and never receive four year degrees. And high school drop out rates for African-American youth exceed 50 percent in many cities and states. If we are serious about the development of the next generation of Black leadership in government, labor, politics, medicine, law, and other professions, we must urgently develop a long-term strategy to reverse these trends.

In California this month, thousands of Black, Hispanic and Asian students will travel to the state legislature in Sacramento to denounce racism in the state's school systems. Activists are calling for an increased funding for student loans and services, ethnic studies as a graduation requirement in colleges, and expanding budgets for elementary and secondary schools. Such activism must be initiated at every state capital across the country. The organizing theme should be "Education is a Human Right."

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PORTLAND OBSERVER is published weekly by Exile Publishing Company, Inc. 525 N.E. Killingsworth St. Portland, Oregon 97211 P.O. Box 3137 Portland, Oregon 97208

(503) 288-0033 (Office)  
Deadlines for all submitted materials:  
Articles: Monday, 5 p.m.; Ads: Tuesday, 5 p.m.

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