

EDITORIAL / OPINION

TOKENS HAVE NO VALUE TO THE BLACK COMMUNITY!

The failure of Chicago Alderman Tim Evans, an African American, to win last Tuesday's mayoral election was indeed a step backward for the city's Black community; after six years City Hall has reverted to the viciously racist white machine, personified by Richard Daley--whose father ruled Chicago with an iron fist for so many years. Evans, a Democrat, undertook a courageous campaign; by running as an independent on the newly formed Harold Washington Party line--named for the first Black mayor of Chicago, who died a year and a half ago--he had attempted to recreate the Black-led, multi-racial, labor/community coalition that put Washington, a progressive, in office and reelected him two years later.

There is much to be learned from the Evans' loss; I think it had a lot to do with the fact that a temporary, one-time-only kind of coalition like the one which backed his independent candidacy cannot be expected to demolish a machine which operates day in, day out, 365 days a year. Nevertheless, one-third of the vote went to Tim Evans' insurgent, independent campaign--a sign that the Black community, from which most of those votes came, is receptive to independent, anti-machine politics. Sometimes failures can be more useful to us than victories.

One example of this is in Los Angeles, where Mayor Tom Bradley, like Tim Evans an African American and a Democrat, was re-elected to an unprecedented fifth term. But Tom Bradley is no Harold Washington! And his victory at the polls, in an election that drew a turnout of only 10%, is no triumph for Los Angeles' Black community--which, like the city's other working class communities of color, is being devastated by poverty, police brutality, homelessness and drugs. Bradley, who cultivates a "nice guy," "low key" image, is in fact nothing more than a Black front man for the wealthy white businessmen who maintain him in office to serve their interests and only their interests.

By the same token, Black attorney William Lucas has been selected by the Bush administration to head the Justice Department's civil rights division as Assistant Attorney General. He is a former Democrat who quit the party to run for governor of Michigan as a Republican. Already the Detroit chapter of the NAACP--Mr. Lucas is the former county executive in Detroit--has voted to condemn his nomination to one of the highest posts in the federal government. The issue is not that Lucas is a renegade Democrat; it's that his loyalty is, first and foremost, to his political masters and not to the people--in particular to the people of color, the lesbians and gays, the women and the disabled it would be his job to protect against discrimination. George Bush is supposedly "reaching out" to the Black community which--as Republican National Committee chairperson Lee Atwater said a few weeks ago in a guest editorial in the New York Times--has gotten nothing from the Democrats for its half century of party loyalty.

But the nomination of William Lucas to be the top civil rights advocate in the country is not evidence of Bush's concern for our rights--just the opposite. It demonstrates that the white supremacist leaders of the Republican Party, like their counterparts in the Democratic Party, will use Black people when it serves their purposes--which are the purposes of white corporate America. They are not our purposes. They do not serve our interests.

Perspectives



Black Genius - White Cover

By McKinley Burt

Well, let us see who else and what else has been covered lest some of us should wake up and discover who we really are. The covers we shake here are both ancient and modern. Before we get into literature, here is a musical item I omitted last week.

In the early 1960's, Fairmont High School, located in Eugene Oregon, graduated a talented group of white teenagers, **The Fairmont Singers**. Eventually, they became nationally famous as **The New Christy Minstrels**. It never occurred to me that there was any significance to the "New" in the groups name until, one day in 1973, I saw an unfamiliar periodical in the Portland State University library. The latest issue of the **Cambridge University Journal** (from England) featured an article "Music of the Christy Minstrels: White Comedians in Black Face."

It was noted by the graduate students who did the research that "of all the white minstrel shows that reaped fortunes in Europe with their Black-face imitations of Afro-American song and dance, none were more successful than the **Christy Minstrels** who came to Dublin, Ireland in 1859. "Black artists who fled slavery in America to find economic opportunity in Europe soon found (like Ruth Brown) that the master had them covered. This happened despite the warning to the Irish Theatre-going public by a prominent newspaper, "Freemans Journal":

"Wait and see a practical company of real niggers with genuine woolly heads and skins of sable that cannot be washed white."

Sometimes the establishment cover takes a more devious twist than the simple substitution of a white person for the original Black innovator (Like where **Granville Woods**, the Black engineer who invented the Automatic Air Brake, is replaced in text and posterity by **George Westinghouse** to whom he sold it). But what else happens is that the **Black Presence** is often obscured by means of geographic or cultural manipulation. If the pretense that

civilization began with the Greeks is allowed to stand then all the preceding 3000 years of African contribution can be safely ignored and if the presence of Africans in Europe can be ignored in text or novel (except as entertainers or exotics), then it can be pretended that all of classical literature and music was generated by whites.

Actually the evidence is very much to the contrary. In Europe some of the world's most famous authors, composers and University professors were Black. Several immediately come to mind, **Alexander Pushkin**, the great Russian poet and novelist (1799-1837) and **William Henry Amo**, the talented German philosopher and mathematician of the 18th century. Amo was born on the West Coast of Africa, and as a child prodigy was brought to Germany by Dutch missionaries. His education was continued and at the age of 14 he was introduced to the greatest of all mathematicians, **Leibnitz**.

Amo went on to become full professor at both the Universities of Halle and Wittenberg, developing a famous theory of codes and other treaties. In the early 1970's he was honored by the West German Republic with special ceremonies and a commemorative stamp.

In early 19th century France there lived the most remarkable Black family of all; **Alexandre Davydela Pailleterie Dumas** was the father (1802-70), and **Alexandre 'Dumas'**, the son (1824-95). The grandfather, also named Alexander, was Napoleon's famed cavalry commander. Both father and son were novelists and dramatists. The son was the author of two of the greatest adventure stories ever written, **The Three Musketeers** and **The Count of Monte Cristo** and was called the "Father of the Modern French Theatre."

All three Black men were described in the French tabloids and journals of the time as the greatest of lovers, adventurers and swordsmen, fighting and winning a score of duels. So fantastic and exciting were the lives of these men, it is no wonder that the Hollywood movie star **Douglass Fairbanks Jr.** was able to make millions as the white cover for the portrayal of lives the Dumas Family actually lived and wrote.

Drug Dealers Sell Genocide

by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr

Today in nearly every small town and large city across the nation, drug dealers and their financial investors and backers are making huge monetary profits by selling killer-drugs. Genocide in this society is indeed profitable. Recently, there has been considerable focus on the drug related murder epidemic in Washington, D.C., the nation's capitol. Now this predominantly African American city is not only besieged with continued political disenfranchisement, but also the devastation consequences of having one of the highest murder rates in the nation. The majority of these murders are drug related. The majority of these murders are committed by African Americans on African Americans. The majority of these murders serve to sell the profit of drug barons who are not from the African American community.

The newly-appointed Federal narcotics chief, William J. Bennett, is attempting to lay the primary blame on the Government of the District of Columbia led by Mayor Marion Barry. One of the classic political and racist maneuvers of the powerful forces of this society is to blame the victims for their victimization. Yes, the Mayor of Washington has had his own set of problems on the issue of challenging the drug epidemic in this city. Yet, to blame Mayor Barry for the genocide that is taking place in the nation's capitol is to camouflage the real culprits and profit barons.

In reference to Washington, Mr. Bennett stated, "Here, where the problem is so glaring so out of control serious questions of local politics and governance can no longer be avoided or excused." The truth is that what is happening in Washington is only a clear mirror image of what is now happening in most of the large urban areas of the United States. The situation nationally is glaringly "so out of control".

Despite the rhetoric of the Reagan and now the Bush Administration, there really is no present Federal priority on stopping drug dealers and in particular their financial backers who have control over this multi-billion dollar illegal industry. It appears that the Republican Party is rather comfortable with the self destruction and self genocide that is being encouraged by the politics of toleration.

There will be no effective solutions for this crisis until there is a greater understanding by the majority of the people of this country as to the profitable role that drugs play both financially and politically by the powerful oppressive forces that really control the United States. Thus, the immediate burden is on the African American community to take all appropriate measures to educate all segments of the community about the reality of this unfolding genocide and to be more committed than ever before to challenge those in power to stop the madness and the drugs from dealing death in the community

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL YOUNG BLACK MEN IN DANGER

We're now reaping the bitter harvest of decades of neglect of our young people. National policies have failed to eradicate their poverty, failed to equip them with education for an information society, and failed to end discriminatory barriers.

The result is that African American men have become an endangered species, with more of our young men added each year to the ranks of the poor, the jobless, the homeless. The impact on the family, the economy and on individuals has been devastating. A major reason for the deterioration of family stability is the deterioration in economic opportunities for black men.

You can track the rise of single-headed families with the decline in the black male work force. It takes two to form a family, and when a young man can't get work or can't earn enough to support a family, fewer families are formed.

Back in 1973, the majority of young males earned enough to keep a three-person family out of poverty. Now, less than half do. Young men aged 20 to 24 who earn enough to stay above the poverty line marry at rates three and four times higher than young men with below-poverty line earnings. Constricted opportunities for young African American men have cut their marriage rates in half over the past 15 years.

Young African American men are trapped between the rock of poor educational backgrounds and the hard place of a changing job structure that demands higher educational levels.

Their dropout rates approach fifty percent or more in some cities. African American students score lower than whites on SAT college entrance exams. Although the black college-eligible population has increased over the past decade, college entrance rates have fallen.

Once our young men do get to college, they drop out at higher rates than whites. Few major in math and the physical sciences, and fewer still go on to earn doctorates in such crucial fields of the future as computer sciences, physics, and engineering.

The more employers talk about the need to hire people with highly developed technical and analytical skills, the less our kids appear to be acquiring those skills. Despite some signs of improvement in test scores, black educational deficiency places the economic future of all African Americans in jeopardy.

The situation young African Americans find themselves in can be ameliorated through broad programs that attack the causes of underachievement. The majority of young blacks today grow up in poverty. Significant numbers live in substandard conditions; many in chaotic, crime-torn neighborhoods.

Community organizations such as the Urban League and others are mounting important programs oriented to help young blacks overcome these disadvantages. Such programs encourage better school performance, male responsibility, reduced teen pregnancy, family stability, work-readiness, and others.

But we also need sweeping national policies designed to assure quality education to all, elimination of poverty for children, decent housing, and broader horizons for our beleaguered young people.

That's why the idea of a national service corps that puts young volunteers to work and gives them training, job experiences, and college or vocational training fees at the end of their service has won so much support.

Government can't continue to stand by and allow another generation of young people to be consigned to, at best, marginal status in our society.

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To the Editor

I would invite your reporters to call me when writing articles about issues such as the legislative response to the Richmond v. Croson case (which struck down minority business set asides). It was reported in your March 23rd edition, for example, that it is too late to introduce new legislation in this session of the Oregon legislature. Although the cut off date for new bills has passed, every legislator has priority bills which may be filed after the expiration date. I fully expect to use one of my priority bills to address the problem raised by the Croson case. Your reporter assumed that because no legislation has yet been introduced, no one is working on a resolution of the problem in Oregon. Again, had contact been made with my Salem office, information about what is being done could have been made available.

Immediately following the devastating decision of the Supreme Court in the Croson case, I instructed my staff to contact legislators in other states as well as the legal counsel for Multnomah County and the Attorney General of Oregon to (1) determine what the impact of the decision would be on the existing Oregon statutory scheme, of which I was the chief sponsor, as well as to (2) outline possible legislative remedies.

From the discussions my staff has had with legal counsel, I understand the impact of the Croson decision to be that, although the federal government can still set up mandatory requirements for participation by minority businesses in public contracts, states and state subdivisions may not, absent very specific showings of actual discrimination against minority sub-contractors. At this stage it appears that there are three possible ways of avoiding the Constitutional prohibition against mandatory set asides for minority businesses in state and local contracts. (1) We can amend the legislation to provide for "goals" rather than mandatory percentages. (2) We can use mandatory percentages but define the beneficiaries in race-neutral terms (by economic or geographic definitions, for example, rather than racial ones). (3) We can undertake to establish a sufficient basis, under the Croson decision, to justify mandatory set asides

for minority businesses. This latter course would initially require a study to determine whether or not it would be possible to make the kind of showing in Oregon which Croson requires. The cost of such a study has been estimated at between \$200,000 and \$1,000,000. If such a study is authorized in the current legislature, the earliest session of the legislature which could consider the evidence uncovered by the study would be the 1991 session.

The Governor and the MBE/WBE advocate, Lina Garcia-Seabold, have also undertaken to consider not only how best to rewrite the statute, but also, whether there are other obstacles to the participation of minority businesses in public contracts which could be addressed -- such as the difficulty of new and small businesses, including minority businesses, in obtaining bonds.

While I understand people's impatience with the seemingly slow process of analyzing the impact of the Croson case and deciding how to respond, important decisions should be made only after careful consideration and with as much information as can be obtained. Other states and localities are in the same situation as Oregon and are also in the process of deciding on the best course of action.

While these things are still in process, I can say this time that I expect to propose legislation which would: (1) Redefine the groups to be benefited by mandatory set asides, probably using a term such as "economically disadvantaged" to describe geographic areas to be benefited and/or "emerging small business" to describe entities to be benefited under the law. (2) Strengthen and broaden existing anti-discrimination statutes. (3) Propose that a study be initiated to determine the extent of racial discrimination which has occurred in various parts of the state in connection with the use of sub-contractors in public contracts, with a view to possible future legislation.

I invite interested persons to contact my Salem Office with questions, suggestions and comments on this issue or any others. (Tel: 378-8823; or toll free No. 800-327-7389).

Respectfully yours,
Margaret Carter

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