

PERSPECTIVES



by McKinley Burt

Last week's article revealed that in 1803 the size of the United States was doubled by tens of millions of acres when Napoleon startled president Thomas Jefferson by suddenly offering him the entire Louisiana Territory at a bargain basement price. This acquisition was quickly followed on by the Lewis and Clark Expedition which soon verified the importance of the prize.

We further disclosed—documented by the St. Helena correspondence of Napoleon—that his (Napoleon's) decision to get out of the Americas was precipitated by the ever present threat of the African freedom fighters in the Western Hemisphere. He rightly concluded that there was no way he could handle the Black problem of continuous slave revolts in the West Indies, and at the same time defend this overseas empire against the challenge of the British, the Spanish, and the Americans who were empire-minded themselves. Napoleon's correspondence pointedly cites the Black hero of the Haitian slave revolt, Toussaint Louverture, as the turning point in his decision: "My folly was the way I handled Toussaint....I lost my army and then I lost Haiti".

Now, what does current commentary have to say about all the African interaction in the affairs of the French nation? My July 6th pronouncement that American history is white neighborhood turf is validated by the current issue of the National Geographic Magazine. The entire issue allegedly is devoted to the history of France, "France Celebrates Its Bicentennial". What is not celebrated here is the key role of many African individuals and

importations. The American authors limit us to a few photos of half-naked entertainers and models, and a discourse on a Muslim ghetto of "African immigrants". Included is a ridiculous and demeaning photo of my mothers cousin, Josephine Baker.

There is, of course, no mention of any of the Black movers and shakers I have described here in these past three weeks: No General Alexander Dumas (or the other eleven Black generals who made the Napoleonic reputation); Nothing on his son and grandson, novelists and playwrights who-like the African Pushkin in Russia—pushed the nation's belle lettres to international acclaim, creating the modern French theatre; And nothing at all on Napoleon's African expedition which brought back culture and technology that sparked a new Renaissance—new modalities in mathematics, furniture and dress, not to mention getting the Louvre Museum off to a flying start.

We would note also that there was no mention of a later and most important from France's African colonies. This was the Impressionist style of painting and sculpture (Modern Art) which fundamentally changed the approach to art, and to philosophy as well. Especially, the African sculpture from Nigeria and Dahomey demonstrated through abstractions that there was another way to reveal the core of reality. Applying these new concepts to their brushes, painters like Picasso, Klee, Cezanne, Van Gogh and others now learned that there was a way, other than literal representation, to abstract and render the very soul and essence of existence—Much in the way that African Americans did with Jazz.

Before I close this series on "African Interaction in France", allow me to add some relevant errata. Napoleon's playgirl sister, Pauline Bonaparte, was sent to Haiti to save him further embarrassment. Here, according to newspapers of the time, she successively became lover to two of Toussaint Louverture's generals, Petion, later president of Haiti, and

Christophe, later Henry I. Placide, the son of Toussaint, married a French Noblewoman, Marie Josephine, daughter of the Marquis de LaCaze, bodyguard of Louis XVI (see J.A. Rogers, "Your History").

The heir to the throne Napoleon built, Prince Napoleon, ironically was killed by Africans in the Zulu War of 1869 (Rogers, "World's Great

Men of Color Vol.II, p.239). In her column in "The Oregonian," July 12, Coretta Scott King, comments on the French Bicentennial, citing the black author Barbara Chase Riboud. This is the woman who has written the most definitive book, "Sally Hemings" on Thomas Jefferson's romantic hypocrisies with Black women while holding African slaves.

And did you notice the Arch de Triumph, that striking structure frequently featured during the television coverage of the French Bicentennial. It is an exact replica of a principal gate of the ancient African city, Thebes—described by the Greek oral poet, Homer, as "one of the seven wonders of the world".

Can we not rise again with this type of motivation? Who indeed was it who said, "He who does not know his history is doomed to repeat it"? Let's hold the fort this time!

VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION AT KBOO RADIO

KBOO Radio will hold a volunteer orientation, Wednesday, July 26, at 7:00PM. This meeting is mandatory if you are interested in getting involved with your community radio station. KBOO offers free training in all aspects of radio broadcast. The orientation will take place at the KBOO studios at 20 S.E. 8th.

KBOO 90.7FM is the Portland area's only non-commercial, listener supported community radio station. For more information call Allen Julian at 231-8032.

KEEPING COOL IS A DANGEROUS GAME

Tony Brown, an African American journalist for whom I have much respect, recently gave Black people in New York City what is, in my opinion, some bad advice. In his nationally syndicated column, "Tony Brown's Comments," under the headline "Blacks Can Help Dinkins By Being Cool," Brother Brown laid out his strategy for helping Manhattan Borough President David Dinkins—New York City's senior Black elected official—to be elected mayor.

"As a Black man, Dinkins' strategists have had to be ever mindful of race and racism in a city that has become in recent months more notorious than Alabama and Mississippi for racially driven incidents," writes Tony Brown. "Race and racism are givens in today's New York," he notes correctly. "...the first full-blown controversy over Black anti-Semitism or a violent incident of a Black against a White during the hot summer months could devastate Dinkins' chances." This is also true. "Dinkins can't control that factor." "Right again." ...Therefore, to move the focus away from race (and racism), Dinkins should concentrate on drugs—a legitimate concern and equally devastating to all racial and socio-economic groups...Dinkins could [explain] that while Whites generally regard drugs as a Black problem, drugs usage is more prevalent among Whites. And Blacks could be appealed to on the basis that they are more frequently the victims of crime which is drug related. These two issues, properly articulated, Brown concludes, "will appeal to 62 percent of the voters and avoid the entrapment of racism." WRONG, TONY. WRONG.

Black people CAN'T avoid the entrapment of racism by pretend-

ing it doesn't exist, which is what Tony Brown and other folks really mean by "being cool." He's telling David Dinkins to keep his mouth shut about the issues of life and death concern to the Black community because to mention those controversial issues would offend white voters.

But that's falling right smack into the racist trap. It's playing right into the hands of the white supremacist leaders of both the major parties—the Democrats as well as the Republicans. And it's a dangerous game! Because when black leaders won't speak out on behalf of the community, they are allowing the powers that be to get away with murder!

You see, a war has been declared against Black people in New York City. Our children are being killed. They are dying of poverty; they are dying of the drugs that feed on despair; they are dying of racism and police brutality; they are dying of the corruption that the professional politicians live on. This is no time for Black people to be playing it "safe" by keeping cool." This is no time for Black leaders to be backing down.

I am running as an independent candidate for mayor of New York City to make sure that our people have a voice in this election. So far David Dinkins has refused to join me in calling for an investigation into the charges made by Adam Abdul-Hakeem (formerly Larry Davis) and Ricardo Burgos that corrupt police officers are not only standing by and allowing cocaine, crack and heroin to come into our communities—they are trafficking the drugs that are killing our kids!

In the case of our sister Tawana Brawley, Mr. Dinkins has refused to add his voice to mine in condemning the travesty of justice that was carried out by the grand jury—egged on by the white corporate media and the highest elected officials of the Democratic Party in New York State.

And he has refused to stand up with me in defending the Reverend Al Sharpton, a courageous and independent Black leader who has been indicted for the "crime" of fighting

for our people.

I have publicly reminded Mr. Dinkins that it was because Reverend Jesse Jackson used his Presidential campaigns to speak out as a leader on controversial issues—and he could have been even more outspoken than he was—that he aroused their passionate support of millions of Americans. Mr. Dinkins needs to arouse the same passion among his supporters. But how can he, if he refuses to take a stand?

Now there is one issue on which Dave Dinkins has spoken out—my support for his candidacy. His campaign manager has said publicly that he doesn't want the nominating petition signatures collected by the Coalition for a Progressive New York, which has come together around my independent campaign, to be counted in putting him on the ballot. This is where he has chosen to take a stand!

But the political scene in New York is changing. The time has come when our official leaders no longer decide! And the community wants to know why David Dinkins doesn't want my support! Because what he is saying is that he doesn't want the support of the tens of thousands of people who signed those petitions!

I am behind David Dinkins 100%. But the Black people of New York City need him to get behind them! I have made a public commitment to put the resources of the New Alliance Party and the Coalition for a Progressive New York into helping him become the next mayor of this city if he should win the Democratic Party primary. But he has to make a public commitment to our people! I am prepared to fight for Dave Dinkins. But he's got to fight for their African American community! Because our children are dying.



Officials sign exposition-recreation facilities management agreement

Representatives of the city of Portland, the Metropolitan Service District and the Committee on Regional Convention, Trade and Spectator Facilities today released a Memorandum of Understanding regarding management of the Oregon Convention Center and other regional facilities. Mayor Bud Clark, Commissioner Mike Lindberg, Metro Executive Officer Rena Cusma and Metro Presiding Officer Mike Ragsdale signed the document. The agreement will go before the city and Metro councils for ratification.

Phase one of the negotiated agreement expands Metro's Metropolitan Exposition-Recreation Commission's (MERC) management responsibilities to include the Memorial Coliseum, Civic Stadium and the Portland Center for the Performing Arts, which are currently operated by the city's Exposition-Recreation Commission. It gives MERC, which currently manages the Oregon Convention Center, full autonomy to manage the facilities. Personnel employed at the three facilities currently operated by the city would become employees of Metro.

The Committee on Regional Convention, Trade and Spectator Facilities (CTS) recommended consolidation of the regional facilities based on a May 1986 study. Bob Ridgley, president of Northwest Natural Gas, Chaired the committee and worked with the city and Metro negotiation teams. The CTS committee was formed with the participation of the city, Metro, state of Oregon, Port of Portland and Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas counties. Its recommendation led to voter approval of convention center construction in November of 1986.

MERC's structure is based on that of the city's Exposition-Recreation Commission. Citizen members are nominated by the city, Metro, and Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas counties, with Metro serving as the appointing authority.

Lindberg, city parks commissioner, will establish a committee to make management and operational recommendations to MERC regarding the Portland Center for the Performing Arts.

The Memorandum of Understanding constitutes good faith agreement endorsing consolidation. Phase one will be followed by a phase two agreement that addresses the details of full consolidation.

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