

PERSPECTIVES

by McKinley Burt

Let me use this column to bring us back to the future for a while (after your rather thorough immersion in Black and African America history). The early post-war years seemed to indicate to many Americans, Black and white, that Blacks had a promising future in this nation. That future is today and its realities are in painful contrast to the expectations of a multitude.

Was it all real or imagined? -The validity of those premises upon which were based those expectations of an early and "full economic and political integration into American society." Apparently there was some justification, given increasing success in the areas of Civil Rights, educational opportunities, and advancements in the work force. There was an emerging cadre of **Black Elected Officials** which was extolled as the ultimate solution to all the urban social and economic problems (We were later to discover that with white flight to the suburbs there was no tax base to support the urban infrastructure).

We may ask, then was there any credibility at all to these dreams of a long-suffering race that finally its aspirations were to be realized, empowered by court decisions, legislation, and official fiat (not to mention rhetoric)? The present condition of the Black masses in urban America is variously described as "critical, traumatic, or even terminal" - and that is not just a matter of hyperbole and media hype. It is given that some alarms are voiced by those in pursuit of grants, whether individuals, social agencies, or law enforcement agencies. Certainly there is evidence in the form of statistics relating to educational disabilities, lack of training, depressed income levels, family disintegration, and gangs. But we need to ask many an agency "where were you yesterday-and have you better solutions?"

Why then, as a member of this underprivileged ethnic group, would I spend so much of my time and resource in research of the history and contributions of my race when the horrendous pressure of immediacy bears down upon us all? It is because of an overwhelming sense of dejection-that disturbing feeling that "it has all happened before". Yea, many times. It may seem trite to repeat that hackneyed phrase, "a race that does not know its history is doomed to repeat it"; but believe me, it is true.

Certainly, for over a year I have cited in this column a 4000 year time line of Black ascendancy to the heights of cultured, political, economic and technological accomplishment. What I have not done is pose the fateful question, "So why are Blacks in the shape they are today? Obviously, I could have provided a litany of apparent reason, many quite compelling: European invasions and conquests of Africa, Colonialism, slavery, the Ku Klux Klan, union constitutions, job discrimination, European immigrants, redlining, you name it. But, you see, it often occurs to me to project an imaginary scenario. Who could the dinosaurs appeal to? Dinosaur gone-gone dinosaur! Reality and nature are merciless.

A question may arise in our minds. Is it time for new ideas, or is it time to newly apply old ideas that worked very well in the past (at least temporarily). It could be that an amalgam of both is indicated. Or perhaps it is necessary to examine the major extinctions we have experienced, and from these evaluations format a technique for preserving our periodic gains. The latter course seems most fruitful to me.

In the following weeks I will develop these thoughts, as I believe this type of inquiry must precede any meaningful examination of urgent social or economic problems. This does not mean that I have been disabused of my notion that Identity is an absolute prerequisite to the social and psycho-logical functions of a race-nor that I no longer feel that the group's history is the key to motivation and drive. But rather, that there must accompany a parallel and continuous intellectual process that goes beyond the wheel. Aren't we the greatest syndrome.

There is no realistic literature on program failure-with a pitifully few exceptions. Without it you cannot train a new generation capable of either social or economic development.

And without it, we are doomed indeed to "repeat history".

PERNELL NAMED MINORITY OUTREACH SPECIALIST FOR AMERICAN RED CROSS

"I was born an educator, and I will die an educator," said Patricia Pernell, Minority Outreach specialist for the Oregon Trail Chapter American Red Cross. As a teacher/educator for 17 years, Pernell doesn't feel she has left the education field by taking the newly-created position at Red Cross. Her duties as Minority Outreach specialist allow her to remain involved with education and schools by promoting health programs, special events and volunteer recruitment.

Pernell, 38, was born and raised in Toledo, Ohio. She received her Bachelor's degree from Central State University, a predominately African-American school, after little more than two years of study.

While in Ohio, Pernell spent her post-graduate years teaching and being an administrator at the elementary level using the Montessori technique—a method used to allow children to learn at their own pace. In August of 1972, she married Howard Pernell.

The Pernells came to Portland in 1978. Patricia laughingly described her pre-conceived idea of Oregon as having "a lot of snow and covered wagons." Once in Portland, the Pernells made their mark by establishing Kemet, Inc., a T-shirt shop.

Patricia continued to teach and later founded the International Little People's Christian School. While at a parent meeting at the Irvington School in 1985, Dr. Matthew Proppett expressed the need for more minority teachers in Portland. "I felt that he was speaking directly to me—that this was my calling," said Pernell. This calling sent Pernell into the Portland Public Schools Minority Teacher Intern Program for two years. After completing the internship and helping her husband turn the T-Shirt shop into a full-time business, Patricia took the job at the Red Cross.

Pernell specifically aims to promote the Basic Aid Training and Babysitting classes offered by Red Cross. She says that she wants to increase the number of people in these classes and offer the classes in convenient North/Northeast Portland locations. Pernell is currently working on a Youth Self-Enhancement Program designed to promote success and career skills to junior-high and high school "at risk" youth.

Dedicated to church activities, Pernell was once named "Mother of the Year" at Maranatha Church. Pernell devotes her extra time to her husband and four children: Stacey, 15; Howard-Omari, 10; Jamal, 9; and Jensine, 7. Getting ready to celebrate her 17th wedding anniversary in August, Pernell says that the key to her good marriage is that she and Howard accept each other as they are. "I am a Christian and an African-American woman," says Pernell. "That's me. I love being of service to God, my family and my community."

MANY VETERANS ARE UNAWARE THEY CAN GET BENEFITS

Although over \$32 BILLION were paid out in veterans benefits last year, billions more went unclaimed in the past few years.

Every year eligibility for benefits and the array of available benefits are changed and very few veterans or their survivors keep up with the latest rules. Because of this, and changes in their circumstances many veterans, their families and survivors are now entitled to money and other benefits from their state and the Federal government even though they were not eligible in the past.

These were the findings of a study group of the Consumer Education Research Center, a 20-year-old national nonprofit consumer group. They found that over one-fourth of the money paid in veterans benefits goes to persons who never served in the armed forces of the United States. Most of these were related by blood or marriage to veterans but many were not. Others were members of the armed forces of countries who fought with us against our enemies.

Since 1974, the Center has been compiling yearly updates describing the latest rules on available benefits and how to qualify for those benefits. They have just issued the 240-large page 1989 COMPLETE GUIDE TO FEDERAL AND STATE BENEFITS FOR VETERANS, THEIR FAMILIES, AND SURVIVORS with a foreword by Sen. Robert Dole. This valuable Book is \$9 (plus \$2 p&h) from CERC-Vets, 350 Scotland Rd., Orange, NJ 07050 or by calling 1-800-

872-0121 with credit card.

Mr. Robert L. Berko, executive director of the consumer group, says that many survivors of veterans are unaware that they might be eligible to receive money, medical care, educational assistance, help in buying a home or other benefits. In fact, eligibility and benefits change constantly and some people ineligible in previous years are now able to start receiving money.

The study found that many people are unaware that they are considered dependents or survivors of veterans. These include those involved in illegal marriages, those who remarried after the death or disability of a veteran, children born out of wedlock to a veteran, parents of a veteran and even dependent grandchildren. Any of these may be eligible for benefits.

Mr. Berko says that the study questioned veterans about benefits and found that the majority were unfamiliar with most of the benefits now being granted under Federal and state laws. Even veterans now collecting were unaware of other benefits for which they were eligible and could be collecting.

For instance, disabled veterans can receive apparel allowances if they use wheel chairs, artificial limbs or any prosthetic device that can wear or damage clothing and, if they have a spouse in need of care, they can receive an allowance to pay someone to provide that care.

Few knew that (unemployed veterans) 65 or older are considered,

permanently and totally disabled and, those with limited income and savings, can collect as much as \$11,000 per year.

Other benefits the consumer found that were little known are:

A veteran (or dependent) can receive up to \$837 (40% in advance) if he or she will assist the VA in a work-study program while in an educational program.

Federal agencies are required to establish affirmative action plans to facilitate employment and advancement of veterans with any degree of disability. In fact some job classifications must be filled by eligible vets.

Families of veterans buried or mentioned on commemorated on Tablest of the Missing overseas are eligible for free passports to visit these sites.

In addition the book includes a complete list of VA facilities and help to secure the information needed with VA applications.

"Even though the Congress and the various state legislatures have provided for money and services to be given to veterans and their dependents," Mr. Berko states, "unless the people know they are eligible and apply they will not collect anything."

As Sen. Bob Dole, a decorated veteran and one familiar with the bureaucracy, says in his foreword, "Mr. Berko's book goes a long way in helping America's veterans cut through red tape so they can receive the benefits they earned and deserve."

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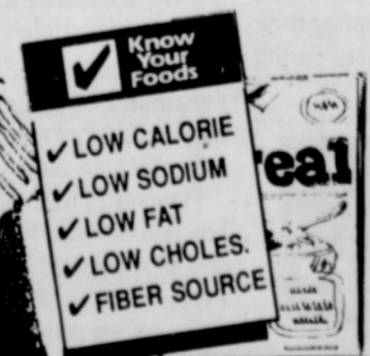
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