

EDITORIAL / OPINION

TO BE EQUAL SAVE THE CHILDREN

By John E. Jacob

The United States is often called the most child-centered country on earth, but the way we neglect our kids makes that very doubtful.

In virtually every other industrial nation, there is an array of child-centered income grants, health care and day care programs, and other family support programs.

But in America, government traditionally takes a hands-off policy. Everybody--rich or poor--is considered to have an equal opportunity to buy the best of everything for their kids, whether pre-school; nursery care or medical services or decent housing.

So kids in affluent families get those indispensable aids to growing up healthy, well-cared for, and well-educated, while children who are poor do not.

And that apparent equal opportunity works out in the real world to disproportionate numbers of African American children being denied the basics they need to grow to fulfilling adulthood.

Almost half of all African American children are poor, but child services as a national issue transcends race. Two-thirds of all poor children are white.

Poor kids are more likely to have health problems, to have learning disabilities, to drop out of school, among other problems.

That makes federal cuts in children's services over the past years even more tragic. Income support and jobs programs for their parents have been cut; prenatal care programs for poor women and their infants was slashed; aid to schools serving the poor was trimmed, and successful programs such as Head Start barely reach a fifth of eligible children.

In addition, while many families were forced off the Medicaid rolls by tightened regulations, some 37 million people, a third of them children, lack health insurance and have limited access to health care.

Congress needs to act on the vital issue of saving our kids. It's taking a small step toward that with a new child care bill that would subsidize day care programs.

The Senate's version, called the ABC bill--the Act for Better Child Care Services--appropriates money to the states for child care subsidies for low income families.

That will help many women take or keep jobs. Private child care services are so costly that low-and moderate income families just can't afford them. Many parents who want to work can't because of the unavailability of child care services.

Child care with an educational component has been proved to improve poor children's school performance and to increase their life chances.

The ABC bill would make only \$1.75 billion available for child care subsidies, but it may be unrealistic to expect Congress to shake more money loose from a deficit-ridden budget at this time. Not because it can't--but because it would be a politically difficult thing to pull off.

But even modest federal grants could stimulate matching funds from state and local governments, and help focus more attention on this crucial issue. Political realities will have to shift to make child services an item on the nation's priority list.

The bill also expands the earned income tax credit, which supplements the earnings of low income working families. That would give them more funds with which to buy child care or health services--far from the total answer to the problem, but certainly a long-overdue step that will help.

Passing an improved child care services bill has to be seen as the first step, not the last. Our kids are our future, and the nation's future depends on how much a break it's willing to give its disadvantaged kids.

NO DEALS

By Dr. Lenora Fulani

Once again Black people are being told that if we want to receive even a sign of justice, we need to make a deal. What's the deal? We need to work "within the system" and keep our mouths shut except for saying "Yes, Sir," "No, Sir," and "Thank you kindly, Sir." The political establishment, white and Black, and their friends in the corporate media are telling us that even when our children are murdered, we can't make any noise.

Jimmy Lee Bruce was a 20 year old Black man who was choked to death by an off-duty white police officer two and a half years ago--about the same time that Tawana Brawley was raped and brutalized by a gang of white men, including cops. The murder took place in Ellenville, New York--about 35 miles away from where the crime against Tawana occurred. As in the Brawley case, no charges were ever filed in Jimmy Lee's murder; the officer who killed him returned to work as if nothing had happened.

Jimmy Lee's parents have finally succeeded in getting Governor Mario Cuomo to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate their son's death. The appointment was recommended by a State Investigations Commission, which has said that the officer who killed this young Black man used "excessive force" and "intended" to hurt him. The new prosecutor has requested that a new grand jury be convened to hear new evidence in the case.

The message is very clear: the only Black people who deserve justice are those who are willing to "cooperate"--to trust the system enough to work within it...even though it's prosecutors from that very system who in both cases participated in covering up the crimes. The only Black people who can even get a hearing from the system (two and a half years after their son was

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DINKINS LEADS NEW YORK CITY

by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

Early in the morning recently in New York City hundreds of clergypersons and other church and civic leaders gathered together for a political prayer breakfast. There was a lot of praying and there was a lot of politicking. The focus of the breakfast was the outstanding leadership of David Dinkins as his campaign to be the Mayor of the largest city in the United States moves into high gear.

We have witnessed many such events over the last two decades as many large cities have grappled with the possibility and opportunity of choosing an African American politician to take the reins of City Hall. David Dinkins is not running because he is an African American, but is running because of his many years of experience as former State Legislator, City Clerk and now Manhattan Borough President.

There was a difference, however, in the tone and content of this early morning gathering. The diversity of the attendees was in itself a testimony to the kind of hope and outreach that David Dinkins embodies. The room was full of African Americans, Latino Americans, and others who had come to hear a word from the frontrunner.

At a time when so many politicians and social commentators are offering little or no vision for the future, it was refreshing to hear Dinkins speak enthusiastically about the possibilities and necessities for constructive change. But change does not happen by osmosis. Positive change for New York City as well as for the rest of the nation will only be accomplished when the right leadership emerges and when the majority of people who believe in justice for all become actively involved.

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PERSPECTIVES

By McKinley Burt

Apparently, I shook up some people last week when I related the Black experience/situation to that of the dinosaur--a not too subtle reference to the extinction of a species. This is a predictable event, a disaster that is assured where there is neither learning, evaluation, or a sense of history.

It happens when a people do not perceive that they exist on a time line, and when their concepts are not experience based--with the consequence that all their genius, ingenuity and innovative institutions are at naught. I remarked that there was "no realistic literature on failures: (are we to return to an oral culture?). An exception was a book by a Black female, "What Ever Happened to Minority Business" (circa 1970). How else does one learn except to examine and assess experience. This book should have become a primer for reformatting the entire approach to Minority Business and the Local Economic Development Corporation.

The half-dozen examples cited in the text recount the same old tired, historical themes: No policy statements, no clear cut goals, no linkage

to relevant activities in the real world, a deficient data base (no materials from related trade or professional associations), A staffing policy based upon friendship, in-laws, and politics--as opposed to drawing from a cadre of experienced practitioners (often called "Capitalist Dogs"), and a general disregard of any of the time-tested procedures that have enabled Asians and other immigrants to leap frog over Blacks.

I have before me what is regarded as one of the classic issues of **Black Enterprise Magazine** (July, 1972). "Blacks And Organized Labor" is the feature article, and equally important is the second, "Community Development Corporations". These are two elements of Black economic progress which have been inseparable from the day of so called emancipation, though, unfortunately, the many have not seen it that way. Not that long after the publication date, I attended a Western Regional Conference on **Community Development Corporations**--held at Portland State University where I taught both Business and Black History courses.

To fully understand the attitudes expressed here, it is important to emphasize that I came to the university from a real world of business and industry (through the ranks from laborer to skilled worker, to account-

ing and Federal Tax Court, to administration and my own enterprises). I am unabashed in stating that it is necessary that people with similar backgrounds need to be involved in either the pursuit of labor's economic goals or those of the community. In the end it is all about money--how to earn it, how to manage it, and how to keep it, Even for Urban Leagues.

At the university it was always reassuring to me at faculty meetings in the School of Business to have Dean Parker skip over several of the Harvard Business School M.B.A.'s and question me on the design and validity of new course offerings. The reason for my delight was that I had just designed and offered a three-term course, Black Economic Experience in the Black Studies Department. The third term of this course--accredited in social sciences and business administration--consisted of a rigorous examination of the **Non-Profit Corporation** in social and economic development in the community. Because I successfully demonstrated that standard, real-time business practices were necessary to community development programs (O.E.O., Model Cities, etc.) I was inundated by scores of white students sent over by their instructors in the Business Department and by Public Agencies.

Returning to those "Black Enterprise" articles, let me comment first on the one titled "Blacks And Organized Labor", cited is the failure (1972) of the United Auto Workers Union, as a whole and specifically, its few Black officials, to deal adequately with the problems of its Black membership--promotions, training and apprenticeship, discrimination in general. Now, just last week, CBS Television did a short documentary on "The Plight of Detroit's Black Auto Workers!" Detailed were the large-scale layoffs of a disproportionate number of Black workers; "wrecking havoc in the community, thousands of homes being lost, families are splintering, kids are being pulled out of college, the folks are committing suicide, and there is a pronounced escalation in alcohol and drug abuse.

Now what in the world happened during the twenty-year span, beginning with a time when a hundred thousand Blacks were employed in the Greater Detroit industrial area in the auto and related industries--and at higher than the national average wage for either Black or white? We are talking about a 30 billion dollar a year gross income, but today Asian immigrants are buying up and operating the retail outlets in the Black neighborhoods--and moving to the wholesale and distribution levels.

Saving Black Youth And Black Progress:

Its Time To Fight The Power

By Ron Daniels

Though African-Americans must muster the energy and resources within our communities to tackle the crisis of Black youth, ultimately we must "fight the power" of the American political and economic system to achieve a change in the condition of African-American youth. The crisis of Black youth is tied to the crisis facing the National African-American Community in general. And the crisis facing the National African-American Community is the direct result of racism, economic exploitation, a woefully inadequate political-economic system and misplaced priorities within that system. The crisis of African-Americans is the crisis of America.

We live in a nation and under a system that has produced unacceptable extremes in terms of the distribution of wealth and power. 1/2 of 1% of the people in America control 26.9% of All of the wealth of this nation. 10% of the people control 72% of the wealth in the United States. One author has dubbed America's system of institutionalized inequality "Democracy for the few".

Then there is the question of values and priorities. America is fabulously wealthy but what does it do with the wealth? There are 3-6 million homeless people in the United States. Thirty-seven million people subsist with no health insurance. There are 30 million Americans who are completely illiterate and another 30 million who are functionally illiterate. That's 60 million people who are plagued by illiteracy in America. And yet America spends .55 cent of every tax dollar on defense while allocating only .02 cent of every tax dollar on education.

More than 1/3 of all African-Americans live in poverty, and the majority of those who are impoverished are women and children. Unemployment in the African-American community remains at what would be defined as "depression" levels in the overall economy. Despite these persistent problems in the African-American community, government programs in such areas as job training, health, social services and housing were reduced by more than 50% in the 1980's under the Reagan Budget cuts. The problems facing African-Americans lie in America's system, its values, and its priorities, and our youth and we as a people are suffering because of it.

The shaping of a compassionate political-economic system with human centered goals and priorities must be the goal for African-Americans. The kind of greed oriented, profit above people ethic which enslaved African-Americans in the first place must be rejected. Our fight for change must pose the vital alternative.

National DEFENSE must be redefined to mean defense against homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance and disease, and defense against unemployment and poverty. If we are to save our youth and our people then we must have a public policy agenda that calls for deep cuts in an insane and run-away "defense" budget. Monies saved from the madness of creating exotic weapons of destruction must be used to fund our new HUMAN DEFENSE PRIORITIES of education, housing, health care and full employment.

Programs like the JOBS CORPS which worked effectively to train youth and prepare them for employment in the sixties and seventies need to be resurrected and fully funded. Rev. Jesse Jackson's innovative proposal to use a portion of the billions of dollars in PUBLIC PENSION FUNDS for job generating programs in housing, highway construction and infra-structure development should be strongly supported.

Last, but not least, African-Americans need and must demand AFFIRMATIVE ACTION and REPARATIONS. The recent battery of Supreme Court decisions which dramatically weakened this nation's resolve and commitment to affirmative action are intolerable acts which must be resisted and overturned in Congress or in the streets if necessary. The sons and daughters of Africa who have suffered in America, and whose free labor and suppressed surplus labor built this nation cannot and must not accept a retreat on basic remedies for the crippling effects of past and present racism and discrimination.

Indeed, if the legitimate demands of Japanese-Americans for restitution for their unjust imprisonment during World War II can be met, then certainly the call for reparations by African-Americans for our enslavement, and the systematic exploitation of our labor warrants even greater consideration. The physical and cultural destruction of African peoples - genocide - constitutes the greatest holocaust in human history. Since "emancipation" we have been asked to "integrate" into a capitalist society without compensation for the crimes committed against us, and no endowment to give us a stake and start, not even forty acres and a mule.

As Frederick Douglas put it more than a century ago "power concedes nothing without a demand". African-Americans are faced with a massive crisis in terms of the plight of Black youth. That crisis is an integral part of the stagnation in progress of the National African-American Community. Its time to make some demands. We will either choose to struggle or lose our future.

To The Editor:

Thank you for the great commentary in your July 27th issue of the Portland Observer, regarding the lack of action to return Ms. Freddy Webb-Petette to her position, as Administrator of Adult and Family Services Division. She should not have been placed on leave for the investigation to be completed. The time is up. The very idea that the man who is seeking to replace her was the head of the investigating team. It is very difficult to expect justice to prevail when this same person has to look at the performance of his supervisor who is really the power of the whole operation. The Director of Human Resources Department...according to the 7-31-89 issue of the Oregonian the chair of the committee says, "The Director is doing a great job."

The African American population must wake up. This is a REAL example of the forces that are designed to discredit our qualified leaders. We must use our professional skills, knowledge of the system and our commitment to justice as the tools to keep doors open. No one is perfect. Let's give African American leaders the same support that we give other leaders.

Let's investigate the budgets of other Divisions. Take a look at their goals, personnel practices, evaluations and training of employees. Elected officials where are you? We need you!

Yours truly,
Carmen P. Walker N.E. Portland

P.S. I am enclosing a copy of the letter I wrote to Governor Neil Goldschmidt.

Couldn't Black leadership read those early articles in the Wall Street Journal and The New York Times; those that forecast the coming turndown and retrenchment in the auto industry? I do remember Ebony Magazine describing how great the Detroit area was for Blacks, picturing the six-figure homes, Lincolns, Cadillacs, and the flamboyant good life of hourly

autoworkers. I didn't see any Arks. Maybe that was the time for Community Development; Before the flood.

Next week, "It didn't have to happen in Detroit "and" will it happen in Portland?" The Spotted Owl and the Wilderness Preservation will not just layoff white loggers by the tens of thousands.