

EDITORIAL / OPINION

Vantage point

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REVERSE ROBINHOOD: THE MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR H.U.D. SCANDAL

During the 1988 presidential campaign Jesse L. Jackson characterized Reaganomics as "reverse Robinhood, robbing the poor to give to the rich". There is ample evidence that the essence of Reaganomics was prosperity for some and misery for the masses. Budget allocations for social service programs serving minorities, the poor and the disadvantaged were cut to the bone while the defense establishment received multi-billion dollar increases. Under Reagan aid to education was slashed by 20% across the board, and despite a growing crisis of homelessness in America allocations for low income housing for African-American communities was cut by an estimated 77%. No question Reagan, Reaganism, and Reaganomics was clearly and unapologetically for the rich and the famous.

But even more damaging, particularly in terms of housing was the manner in which the inadequate pool of funds that was appropriated was abused and misused by Reagan's rich and influential Republican buddies. While exhorting the poor to work hard and make do with what they have, in effect a den of influential thieves were pimping of the poor by using the Department of Housing and Urban Development as their lucrative little play ground. While an adoring public was mesmerized by Reagan's academy award winning performance of the century, his administration reeked with the stench of influence peddling and corruption. The stars and stripes, patriotism, motherhood and apple pie for the masses, and allegiance to personal enrichment for Reagan's pals. God knows how many of these rich hypocrites had their hands in the H.U.D. cookie jar.

Some individuals reaped hundreds of thousands even millions of dollars at the public trough. Fortunately the pigs got sloppy, and the rip off was uncovered. Though the enormity of the scandal is still coming into full view, in excess of 8 billion dollars of public dollars may have been stolen; dollars which should have been destined to provide disparately needed assistance for the growing number of impoverished victims of Reaganomics.

According to a recent article in Newsweek (8/7/89) the number of low income households who receive no housing assistance increased by 1.4 million households from 1979 to 1987. Aid to low income housing was sharply reduced from 34.2 billion to 14.9 billion, and the federal government is not even meeting half of the demand for low income housing. Long waiting lists of anywhere from 3-7 years are not uncommon. Recently in Youngstown, Ohio a near riot erupted when thousands of people showed up to apply for a modest number of low income housing units. While America's poor suffered, rich thieves thrived off of public welfare. It was reverse Robinhood.

From the African-American perspective there are many lessons to be learned from this scandal. One major lesson is that Black faces in old places (or new ones for that matter) will not necessarily promote and protect the interests of African-Americans, minorities and poor people. H.U.D. was presided over by a man with a Black face, "Secretary" Samuel Pierce, otherwise known as "Silent Sam". It is interesting to note that this is the same Samuel Pierce that the F.B.I. targeted in the 60's to replace Martin Luther King as our new leader.

He was perceived as the right type of "Negro" to provide "responsible" direction for African-Americans. AFRICAN-AMERICANS MUST ALWAYS PICK THEIR OWN LEADERS! And we must select leaders based on their values, principles, and commitment to the African-American agenda, human rights, and human liberation, not just skin color. Obviously the F.B.I. knew what it was doing when they selected Samuel Pierce to be of service to America. They knew he would be the "Spook who Sat by the Door".

Finally it all comes down to values, principles, philosophy, and ideology if you will. African-Americans must remain at the cutting edge of the movement for a social justice, and social transformation in America. For beyond the blatant excesses of Reaganism and Reaganomics there is a basic "American value system" that produces the Reagans of the world. A value system that places priority and a premium on materialism, profit, property, individualism and fosters greed. Unless African-Americans are rooted in a different kind of value system and are committed to a different set of ideals then our Black faces will be right there with white faces-robbing the poor to give to the rich with no pangs of conscience. If we're not conscious and careful we too can get caught up in the reverse Robinhood syndrome.

"The Legacy of Huey P. Newton" Along The Color Line

Dr. Manning Marable

The recent brutal murder of Huey P. Newton in Oakland has been used as a metaphor for the nihilism and ultimate futility of Black militancy. In a predictable editorial, the *New York Times* pontificated that the co-founder and leader of the Black Panther Party was a self-destructive "prisoner of the Oakland ghetto streets where he grew up." Other Black Panther leaders had successfully made the transition to the middle class and political conformity, but not the "melancholy" Newton. "He was in and out of prison, in and out of court, in and out of drugs and alcohol abuse." The message is clear: Newton, and not the system he struggled against, was responsible for his demise.

Nearly a quarter of a century has passed since two young, militant Black men, influenced by the uncompromising example of Malcolm X, discussed creating a political formation for self-defense in an antipovity office located in East Oakland. Huey P. Newton was five years younger than his friend Bobby Seale, yet the charismatic Newton developed as the principal leader and spokesperson for the Black Panthers and their youthful cadre. Their black leather jackets, outlandish rhetoric and tendency to parade with guns gave them an image of urban guerrillas. But an analysis of their original "Ten Point Program" reveals that their immediate objectives were reformist, rather than revolutionary.

The Black Panthers called for self-determination, the right of any people or nation which has been historically oppressed or politically dominated. They insisted upon full employment, decent housing, an end to police brutality and violations of civil rights, educational reforms, and "freedom for all Black men held in federal, state, county, and city prisons and jails." With the exception of the last statement, nothing demanded by the Panthers really represented a cry for the violent overthrow of the American legal system, political economy or the powerful elite of white males who control the wealth and property within this society. The Black Panthers did not attack policemen patrolling the Black community without cause, and did nothing to provoke armed assaults against white individuals or white-owned property within the Black community.

By late 1967, the Black Panthers had initiated a free breakfast program for Black children, and were offering medical services to ghetto residents without charge. And unlike many Black Power-inspired groups, which took the simplistic view that all whites regardless of their social class or political ideology were the enemy, the Panthers took direct steps to link their struggle for Black self-determination to the broader currents of social change within American society and throughout the world. They coalesced with white student and community activists who opposed America's illegal and immoral war in Vietnam, and called for the development of a progressive united front between all oppressed peoples of color and reform-minded whites to transform this country's economic and political system.

The Panthers consisted of several thousand idealistic and dedicated young men and women. Some within this activist formation had political experience in previous organizations-for instance, the leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Stokely Carmichael, became the Panthers' Prime Minister in 1968: SNCC organizer James Forman and activist H. Rap Brown also briefly worked with the Panthers. But most of these young Black militants, still in their teens and twenties, had little grounding in political strategy and tactics, organizational and technical expertise. Errors were inevitable. Women were too frequently relegated to secondary-level tasks, and sexism within the ranks was a serious problem. The internal structure of the party didn't adequately permit full democratic discussion and participation of the members, which created a near cult-like allegiance surrounding Huey. The Party never encouraged fully a good comprehension of political education, so members could be confused and alienated with shifts in the formation's political line. The tight, autocratic structure actually assisted the police and governmental agencies to infiltrate and manipulate Panther locals.

No error ever committed by Newton and the Black Panthers, however, can begin to equal the massive crimes carried out by the U.S. government in the name of law-and-order. By July 1969, the Black Panthers had been targeted by 233 separate actions under the FBI's Counter-Intelligence Program. In 1969 alone, twenty seven Panthers were killed by the police, and 749 were jailed or arrested. The FBI deliberately manipulated Black nationalist groups to assault the Panthers, sometimes with murderous consequences. In Chicago, Panther leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark were murdered by police in a planned raid. And in early 1970, the FBI ordered its field offices to "counteract any favorable support in publicity to the Panthers" by placing anti-Panther propaganda in the media. During these years, Newton was shot, imprisoned, and in exile. That he survived at all, despite this massive conspiracy, is remarkable.

Huey Newton was no saint. A decade before his death, he had acquired a reputation in Oakland as violent and unpredictable. Like all political visionaries, he was a part of his political environment, and was hardened by his government. But Newton offered a path of liberation to his generation of young African-Americans, especially young Black men. Instead of falling victim to gangs and Black-against-Black violence, Newton encouraged young people to organize for justice and community control. While Black elected officials told African-American youth that the system was inherently just, if only given a chance to work, Newton correctly called for the transformation of power relationships within society. Poverty, ignorance, homelessness and hunger could not be destroyed, Newton argued, unless the oppressed seized the reins of power. Despite his personal shortcomings and weaknesses, Newton's control insight still remains correct. Huey P. Newton should be remembered as a contributor to the struggle for Black freedom.

There's an old saying on Wall Street that when virtually everyone moves in the same direction by either buying or selling stocks, the crowd is almost always wrong. As autumn approaches, the investors and stock brokers are once again forming a near unanimous opinion about the future direction of the stock market, and in turn, the prospects of the U.S. economy during the next twelve months. And the crowd is declaring that the only direction for the market is "up".

In late August, the Dow industrial average surged to 2734.64, breaking its previous peak of 2722--which was, if some of us might forget, the peak of the famous 1987 bull market. The Dow has soared nearly one thousand points since the gloomy days of October, 1987, when the stock market crash destroyed billions of dollars in equities and dropped an unprecedented 507 points in a single day.

Given the profits which have been made since the 1987 crash, why are so many investors going back into the market with such optimism? There are several fundamental reasons. First, international investors are just beginning to get back into the U.S. stock market, after being burned badly in the 1987 crash. Billions in foreign investment could drive up the price of stocks. Second, there appears to be greater confidence that inflation is under control. Two years ago, the Federal Reserve Board was beginning to tighten interest rates to reduce inflation. Today, interest rates have declined sharply since the beginning of this year. For several months, retail sales figures have also increased, indicating consumer confidence in the future. Unemployment figures have leveled off below six percent for adults in the labor force.

A third factor is technical. Stocks analysts believe that the real value of stocks, the price to earnings ratio, is not reflected in the actual market price of many stocks. Elaine Garzarelli, a strategist at Shearson Lehman Hutton who accurately predicted the 1987 crash, now claims that a "reasonable" price for the Dow would be at 2,850 to 3,000, an increase of more than one

PERSPECTIVES

by McKinley Burt

I had planned this week to return to a discussion of issues in contemporary education, and to reserve further comments on urban economics for *The Observer's* Special Business Issues on October 5. However, it proves exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to separate the two concepts, so we will examine them as the one issue they are.

In recent months there has been a flurry of media comment on the African-American Baseline Essays' component of the Portland School District's Desegregation Program. We have a recent headline, "Portland Becoming National Model for Campaigns to Improve Schools". An accompanying article details promising developments in a number of cities; we do hope that, unlike Portland parents, they will not have to wait about eight years for the tooth fairy (lesson plans).

In that article several pertinent comments are given in bold type: (a) "The Portland model represents a long-term battle to challenge the American public schools and their racist notions." (b) "The ecstasy is it originated here. The agony is it has not been implemented here to the degree we'd like." They certainly have that last right-and could have added the expenditures of millions of dollars and many years of activity; while some of the original curriculum contractors like myself cannot find a single lesson plan of our own use.

How do I know? Easy, I have employed myself as a detailer (the term explained later), and have gained the assistance of some parents and teachers. Here is the case where my aforementioned dovetailing of business and education occurs. The real world of commerce, for which students must be educated, also offers some very useful models for the administrative side of the education establishment.

Several months ago I cited as "best in its field" a book written by a Black female economist: *What Ever Happened to Minority Business?* A specific case study is closely related to matters here-a complicated plan by Blacks to manufacture and distribute a new detergent in the huge market defined as the "Greater Detroit Metropolitan Statistical Area" (5 cities and 3 states at the time). The project was initiated when Blacks stormed a major supermarket chain with pickets led by community activists, social agencies, local politicians-all backed by considerable pressure from the minority press. Sound good: It shouldn't for soap powders are among the most competitive merchandise on supermarket shelves. The Star system seldom

works.

Now, when you shop at your market have you noticed the smartly dressed men with \$30 ties-moving up and down the aisles armed with notebooks, electronic pads and feather dusters? Surely you didn't think they were employed by the store. These are the detailers I spoke of; they shed their expensive coats and go back to the storeroom with hand trucks, bringing up fresh stock where store employees have not had time (or inclination). After all, when you are competing with Tide, Oxydol, Cheer, etc. (Registered Trademarks), you try to keep your brand prominently up front.

The manufacturers or distributors who employ detailers to monitor individual stores know that the ultimate goal of the master plan (the only goal) is to place the product in the hands of the consumer. Tens of millions of dollars of work and planning would be thrown away if, unbelievably, this final operation were not funded or promptly implemented at the right time. The educational parallel would be the delivery phase of placing lesson plans on a teacher's desk. Unfortunately, it turned out that our Black Entrepreneurs of soap powder in Detroit had never heard of detailing and were soon out of business. Nobody could find their product on the shelves.

The principal parallel between the Detroit project and Portland's educational program-in the parlance of commerce-is that they were both heavily "front-end loaded; that is both concentration on a Star-studded launch phase (Baseline Essays in Portland), with little structure to the detail function of product delivery. The lesson plan designers, selected for experience and know how, were effectively divorced from the final (and only) goal-monitoring and implementing the delivery system. No industry in America would spend millions of dollars to develop a new product and then leave out the final step or designers.

Next week I will expand on these issues, and explain how I deal with school system contracts in other cities. Unlike the 1970's when I stayed on airplanes trying to fulfill contracts anywhere and everywhere. Today I use the technology available-such as placing a fax lesson plan on a Birmingham teacher's desk hours after a special request. At present I use the facilities of a former white student who owns a fast-growing computer company in Beaverton. He has nation-wide WATS Lines and Televideo Conferencing facilities, but this time next year I should have my own plant again, servicing California, Eastern and Southern School districts-including 800 numbers to market my Video Cassettes on Black History. Practice what you preach!

PORTLAND OBSERVER
OREGON'S OLDEST AFRICAN-AMERICAN PUBLICATION
Established in 1970

Alfred L. Henderson/Publisher Leon Harris/General Manager

Gary Ann Garnett Joyce Washington
Business Manager Sales/Marketing Director

PORTLAND OBSERVER
is published weekly by
Exie 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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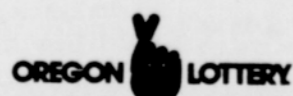
Subscriptions: \$20.00 per year in the Tri-County area.
The PORTLAND OBSERVER - Oregon's oldest African-American Publication-is a member of The National Newspaper Association - Founded in 1885. The Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc., New York.

thousand points. Fourth, a growing sense of "speculation fever" is also behind the recent drive in stock prices on Wall Street. A.T. & T. stock has increased nearly 40 percent in 1989--but there are plenty of investors who think that the price is still undervalued. Like Pete Rose, thousands of people will continue to place speculative bets until they are pulled involuntarily from the betting table.

The trouble with Wall Street's speculative fever for profits is that real economic dangers may lurk just around the corner. The greatest potential danger is the massive debt structure in this country. The Federal government's debt exceeds \$2.1 trillion. Even a modest downturn in consumer spending could trigger an avalanche, with businesses laying off several million workers, who in turn could not pay off their credit card debts and their mortgage notes.

A small recession, it set into motion by the Federal Reserve to squeeze inflation, could panic foreign investors, who could pull their money out of the U.S. market. Foreign private holdings now amount to \$178 billion in corporate bonds, and \$172 billion in equities.

The Federal Reserve's strategy is to stall a recession as long as possible. But despite the glowing news on Wall Street, a closer examination reveals that economic danger may be only months away.



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