

EDITORIAL / OPINION

Perspectives



by Professor McKinley Burt

Will Johnny Ever Learn To Read

We continue on from last week's reference to the early 'Normal School' or Teachers College. I mentioned that both my mother and aunt graduated from such an institution--providing me with an early childhood introduction to the educational process. This was in St. Louis and until World War II, this excellent school system organized by German immigrants (Busch-Budweiser) was preeminent in the nation.

Even with the racist salary differential for Black teachers and administrators in the segregated schools, the academic standards for ghetto youth far surpassed those of today. How about the following requirement for high school graduation: Geometry I & II, algebra I & II, general science I & II, Biology I & II, physics and chemistry. Also, there was English all the way through, social sciences, geography, and a mandatory foreign language--French or Latin.

You did all of this or you sat there until you were big enough to be a line-backer for the Chicago Bears (you really didn't want to mess with the truant officers of those days). I attended high school during the 'great depression' and it is to be noted that we had a lot more disadvantaged and hungry kids than now--teachers fed and sheltered many!

My resurgent interest in the education process and teacher training began in the 1960s when positions in industry brought me face to face with some frightening revelations. The 'college graduates' whom I hired or worked with showed increased disabilities in ability to read, write or count. For the first time I was really hearing that Catholic Priest from Chicago who wrote the book, 'Why Johnny Can't Read'. Later, he was to write, 'Why Johnny Still Can't Read'. Seeking answers, I was upset enough to return to St. Louis to visit former teachers and a teacher college.

Using my favorite mode of exposition, I present two relevant and experience-based models. First, the local 'Adams High School Experiment' of the 1970s (an absolute disaster, and indicative of more problems to come). After reading in Time Magazine that two young, white yuppie professors from Boston had been funded to implement their "new wave" education approach here in Portland. I visited them at their staging area in the basement of Jefferson High School and found that their middle class, prep school-type demeanor and enthusiasm was impermeable to any realistic input. They were not to be deterred from offering a potpourri of student-selected, wimpy courses in 'cafeteria style'.

These illogical pedants, trained in the new "Great Society" format of the socio-economic teacher college, could not be told that the majority of their students would come from feeder schools

already exhibiting a disaster syndrome--the same with transfers. They were to completely ignore the traumas only recently being addressed by the 'Desegregation Process': Remedial basics, discipline, absenteeism and dropouts. I can comment favorably on the 'new look' from Boston, having met and talked at length with two of the city's successful urban educators--recently listed among the top 25 in the nation. There may yet be hope of Black children achieving the standards advocated by E.d. Hirsch in his 1988 book, 'Cultural Literacy'.

It was to be expected that, later, in my classes at Portland State University, I would encounter many unprepared and tragic victims of the 'Adams Caper'. But let us turn to a more inspiring model, one of inspired correction. We have the 'Windsor Hills Elementary School' which several decades ago became a 95% Black miracle in West Los Angeles. At first this area was exclusively white, but in the 1950s a flood of upwardly mobile Blacks of a new middle class changed the demographics to a predominately minority community. As cited in the Black press, the "good teachers" and acceptable standards were part of the 'white flight'. A school that had ranked among the best now ranked 40th.

The Black community responded with a memorable surge of anger and energy, declaring war on the school board and the teacher unions. A determined cadre of aerospace engineers, accountants, lawyers, doctors, computer programmers, bankers and college professors, filed law suits almost daily, staged sit-ins at the school board and assaulted the "mediocre, sandal-wearing, low cleavage, hippie broads alleging to be teachers" as the Black press described them (The school district had begun to use the school as a dumping ground for all the misfits in the system). Many of my friends and in-laws were parents there.

Within months the community had won lawsuit after lawsuit, ousting the weirdos and racists, upgrading texts and curricula, and upscaling laboratory equipment, within three years we find the Los Angeles Times newspaper announcing that the Windsor Hills Elementary School ranked tops in the city among 400 elementary schools. First in two major categories, 'Mathematics and Reading'. As in Washington, D.C. (Hobson vs. Board of Education), it was demonstrated that the people can win against the establishment.

However, the battle is never fully won--Educational excellence requires 'eternal vigilance'. Black parents all over the Los Angeles area tried to get their children enrolled in the school--by every subterfuge, even bribing some residents to secure an address in the area. This influx of mostly unprepared students soon saw a substantial drop in the schools ratings. Be aware and be prepared, the chasm is wide and deep.

VANTAGE POINT

Hypocrisy Haunts U.S. Policy In Panama And Latin America



by Ron Daniels

Intervention level reached a frenzied pitch recently when the pariah of Panama, General Manuel Antonio Noriega, alluded a possible Coup by disgruntled officers within the Panamanian Defense Forces. Angry Senators, members of Congress, policy analysts and commentators within the media denounced the Bush administration for not directly intervening to topple and capture the drug dealing dictator. You didn't really have to read between the lines to get the point that there is a sizeable segment within the American populace that feels that the U.S. government has the right to do whatever it pleases in Central America. It's like the United States owns this hemisphere, and its awesome military might can be used at will to make anything "right."

America needs to stop meddling in the affairs of other nations, particularly the developing nations of Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Western Hemisphere. America is the most feared and despised nation in this hemisphere. The U.S. gained that distinction because it has a history of using its power, not to aid and assist the developing nations of Central America, South America and the Caribbean, but to suppress the aspirations of these nations in the interest of U.S. Corporation; Corporations seeking to exploit the cheap labor, raw materials, and cash crops of the region to enrich themselves at the expense of the masses of workers and peasants.

African-Americans must be clear about whose interests we are prepared to defend as it relates to U.S. foreign policy if we are to remain the moral conscience of this nation and its best hope for a creation of a new society. That clarity must not be clouded by the fact that a Black face, in the person of General Colin Powell, now sits at the helm of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Black faces in old places do not necessarily translate into a change in perspective or policy. And so the beat goes on in Central America. Nothing has changed in more than a century.

Between 1823 when the U.S. claimed Latin America as an area of influence under the Monroe Doctrine, to 1983 when the U.S. invaded the tiny island nation of Grenada, U.S. troops intervened in the region more than 40 times. While professing to favor democracy and self-determination, in reality U.S. foreign policy functioned on the dictum "the business of government is busi-

ness." Several Central American nations including El Salvador, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Guatemala were converted into virtual neo-colonies by the infamous United Fruit Company. They became "Banana Republics."

Multi-millionaire banker J.P. Morgan conspired with the U.S. government to take the Panama region from the sovereign nation of Colombia under the pretense of "liberating" Panama from a repressive Colombian government. Panama quickly became a U.S. Colony and the canal which the U.S. wanted to construct could now be built and owned (on Panama's land) by America. For decades the United States backed ruling oligarchies or elites headed by dictators who were willing to allow U.S. business interest to profit handsomely from the exploitation of the resources of the region. Hence democracy was never a real issue as long as the dread dictator Somoza and his family ruled in Nicaragua. Nor were the dictatorships in Haiti or Cuba a problem as long as U.S. business interests reined supreme. In fact U.S. troops invaded the Dominican Republic in 1965 to thwart the democratic election of Juan Bosch, and the U.S. was directly involved in the overthrow of the democratically elected government of Allende in Chile in 1973.

In the more recent history of Panama, Noriega appears to have been just fine as long as he was co-operating with the Reagan-Bush administration in funneling illegal aid to the Contras in Nicaragua. Noriega was on the U.S. payroll as was revealed by the Iran-Contra scandal. No doubt Reagan, Bush and company were aware that Noriega was dealing in drugs then. Apparently they were willing to look the other way as long as Noriega was their boy. Something went sour in the whole affair and their boy became the bad boy, subject to U.S. indictment, economic sanctions, diplomatic pressures, and even invasion. Now the threat is that if the Panamanian people don't get rid of Noriega, then the U.S. may refuse to give them back their canal!

I don't like General Noriega. But that's beside the point. The United States because of its checkered history of self-serving intervention, big stick diplomacy, greed, and hypocrisy has lost the moral authority to lead in this hemisphere. The Panamanian people must solve their own problems. Thus far U.S. sanctions, threats, and covert C.I.A. action have simply rendered a bad problem worse. Meanwhile we hear no clamor for tougher sanctions against South Africa, or "intervention" to bring about democracy and Black majority rule to end the dictatorship of apartheid. U.S. Foreign policy continues to be filled with hypocrisy and contradictions.

Commentary

Charles Jordan Must Show Stability

The return of Charles Jordan as parks bureau chief poses many questions for Portlanders. His defection in 1984 after winning re-election as City Commissioner left many of his supporters disillusioned, frustrated and in some instances, angry.

Mr. Jordan was elected by a constituency that poured time, effort, and money into his campaign only to see the candidate abdicate before being sworn in, even though the campaign was successful.

Word has it that upon his return, Mr. Jordan should concentrate on appointed positions for any support he seeks for an elective office would be hard to come by.

Voters in Portland take their politics very seriously. They support a candidate who demonstrates leadership and genuine concern for this city's problems.

Given the history of the past, Portland has many:

Racism is at an all time high. Police morale is at its lowest ebb since the days of former Chief Penny Harrington. Economic development is prospering throughout most of Portland, but the inner-North-Northeast section is conspicuously absent from reaping any benefits due to little planning or no planning.

While these problems do exist, this

is a city that still attracts industry and other businesses (especially tourism) because of its natural beauty and strong and progressive leadership in some quarters.

As a former politician and respected spokesperson for this community, one can only assume that with his aggressive and commanding leadership, Mr. Jordan just may find too many "layers at the top," and seek out new ventures.

Commissioner Lindberg and the mayor's statement that Mr. Jordan will not be a candidate for the mayor's office in 1993 is not only "luke warm" but borders on the threshold of illegality.

Thus, for any office holder to seek to muzzle or place restraints on him as a condition of employment is wrong. Mr. Jordan has the constitutional right to run for any office he so chooses and at any time one becomes available.

While this city does need new leadership, that leadership must come from those who have a demonstrated capacity for far-reaching vision.

Such vision almost always comes with stability. If Mr. Jordan does someday decide to seek out elected office once again, hopefully he will be more considerate of his supporters than before.

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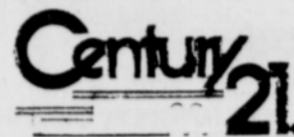
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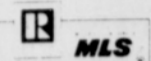
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Speaker Willie Brown To Keynote Black Women Physicians Eighth Annual Fall Benefit

LOS ANGELES--The Association of Black Women Physicians (ABWP) will hold its Eighth Annual Fall Benefit themed, "Honoring our Past, Investing in our Future," Saturday evening, Oct. 28, at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles. The Black tie optional affair begins with a 6:30 p.m., reception and dinner at 7:30 p.m.

Dr. Anitha Mitchell, president of ABWP, stated, "Our membership is extremely delighted to welcome Speaker Willie L. Brown, Jr. as Keynote for our benefit. He is not only one of the most erudite and charismatic orators in the country, he is also a respected and influential leader."

Under Mr. Brown's Speakership, California has enacted major reforms in the Medi-Cal system. He has authored several landmark medical bills including legislation establishing the Child Health Disabilities Program.

Presiding over the evening's proceedings as Mistress of Ceremonies, will be Ms. LaRita Shelby, radio personality of KGFJ-AM in Los Angeles. Entertainment will be provided by The Fantasia Band.

According to Dr. Mitchell, "ABWP is looking forward to presenting its an-

nual Rebecca Lee, M.D. Scholarship Awards to deserving, dedicated, African-American women in medical school." She continued, "We will also honor three well known and respected Black women physicians with our Association of Black Women Physicians Lifetime Achievement Award. The honorees this year are: Marguerite Lewie, M.D., Mary McCoo, M.D. and Anna Smith, M.D."

ABWP was founded in 1982 with a mission to improve the health and welfare of its community and humankind in general, through education, guidance and service. In addition the philanthropic organization provides needed monetary support for individuals and projects related to fundamental health issues impacting the Black community. Since 1983, ABWP has awarded more than \$50,000 dollars in scholarships to African-American women studying to become physicians.

Along with Dr. Mitchell, the slate of officers includes: Natalie Sanders, M.D., president-elect, and Jasmine Bowers Obioha, M.D., vice president.

For dinner reservations and further information, you may contact the ABWP public relations firm of Alescia Buford and Associates at (818) 995-6545.

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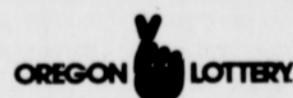
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