

## Perspectives

### To Your Good Health IV: More From African-Americans



by Professor McKinley Burt

Every so often, I'm able to write a column that really gets your attention and so it was last week when I described my social security-financed Medical Education projects (the lean machine-Tri-Met and Pay Phone). It was not only the grassroots segment of the population that responded, but two industries and a foundation made inquiry, I expressed my appreciation to all for their interest, but was quick to point out that, not being naive, I was quite cognizant that with a small staff (including a stenographer and a liaison person to interface the infrastructure), I could easily double or triple my production. Particularly, feedback could be implemented in terms of monitoring and maintaining statistics.

The declining health conditions in this country, not only for minorities but for poor people in general, have provoked alarms in many areas. In October Mehary Medical College in Nashville, Tenn. hosted a national conference focused on the growing threats to the health status of low-income Americans. On Dec. 6th a national satellite teleconference on "The State of Black Health Care" downlinked to local town hall enclaves across the country, including Portland. Issues addressed have ranged from the need for health education, greatly disproportionate infections of certain types to closing of urban (and rural) hospitals and the lack of health insurance. But I would also give a great deal of credit to all those caregivers from the communities who have arisen to man the barricades. Locally, and among others, let me cite Ms. Mariah Taylor of the North Portland Nurse Practitioner Clinic and Dr. Jewell L. Crawford, Family Physician.

A particular area of concern (and hope) to me has been that great proportion of Black high school graduates--and drop-outs--who in no way will have the opportunity to acquire a college education. But when you examine the backgrounds of those Black Inventors I write about--most of whom had equivalent, or less preparation--it becomes apparent that since genes don't change in two generations, these contemporary youths are capable of the same level of contribution to industry and technology. What is needed is intensive escalation of skills in reading, writing and comprehension; that and a special type of orientation

that involves an understanding of the infrastructure--what it is and how you relate to it. For 6,000 years the world's great innovators and engineers have come from these ranks, with or without going into a more formal structure. Toward designing a program to this end I have been writing and talking to industry, government agencies and congressional committees. By 1991 I should have something going; A college component follows on.

Let me cite this achievement by a Black high school graduate:

*This is an autobiography of an extraordinary Black man who struggled against overwhelming odds and achieved international recognition in a highly sophisticated field in which he had no formal education or certification. It is also the fascinating story of the genesis of much of modern cardiac surgery and of crucial investigations into the nature of shock. It is, finally an account of Alfred Blalock's discoveries and contributions and his methods of training surgeons.*

*Vivien T. Thomas, a high school graduate, was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Johns Hopkins University and was made a member of the medical school faculty in recognition of his contributions to the development of cardiovascular surgery and to the education of young surgeons.*

*Over the years at Vanderbilt and particularly at Hopkins, Thomas helped to train a group of surgeons, including Henry Bahnson, Denton Cooley, Rollins Hanlon, Mark Ravitch, and David Sabiston, who are currently leaders in the American surgical community.*

*Trained in laboratory techniques by Alfred Blalock and Joseph W. Beard, Thomas remained Blalock's principal technician and laboratory chief for the rest of Blalock's distinguished career. Thomas very rapidly learned to operate, to do chemical determinations, and to carry out physiologic studies. He became a phenomenal operative technician, able to do complicated experimental cardiac operations totally unassisted and to devise new ones. Pioneering Research in Surgical Shock and Cardiovascular Surgery is of value to cardiac surgeons, surgical researchers and technicians, and scholars interested in*

*the history of medicine, the history of science, American and Black Studies. \$24.95. December 1985.*

Of course we are all not this good, but oh so many could be employed at far above the minimum wage and MacDonald's level that has been forecast for them. Let us move on to our medical contributor of the week:

*Dr. Percy L. Julian (1899-1970): Millions of sufferers from Arthritis, a crippling disease, owe their comfort and health to the "soybean chemist" who brought the healing drug cortisone within their reach. His outstanding contributions to the field of organic chemistry include the synthesis of the drug physostigmine and the extraction of important hormones from the soya bean.*

*The grandson of a former slave, Percy Julian was born on April 11, 1899. He was one of a family of six children whose father, James Sumner Julian, was a railway mail clerk. That a good education was part of the Julian family tradition is shown by the fact that his two brothers went on to become physicians and his three sisters all won master's degrees.*

Louis Haber;

*Black Pioneers of Science*  
Dr. Julian's high school training (Alabama State Normal School for Negroes) was so bad that when he was admitted to DePauw University in Indiana it was as a subfreshman. However, when he graduated four years later in 1920 he was Phi Beta Kappa and class valedictorian. After refusal at top white graduate schools he taught chemistry at Fisks University for two years. A fellowship to Harvard launched his great career and from there he went on to a Ph.D. in Vienna.

After winning accolades from leading scientists all over the world for his work in synthesizing the healing drugs found in plants, America denied him a position of professor as head of a chemistry department (DePauw). He was given employment at the Glidden Paint Company where over the years he developed almost as many useful chemical and medicinal processes as the renowned Dr. George Washington Carver. As with all the great Black scientists we must always wonder how much more this great genius could have contributed. Even so he found much time and energy to support the Dr. Martin Luther King from the beginning.

## Mark and Ramon: True Friends

By Ulysses Tucker, Jr.

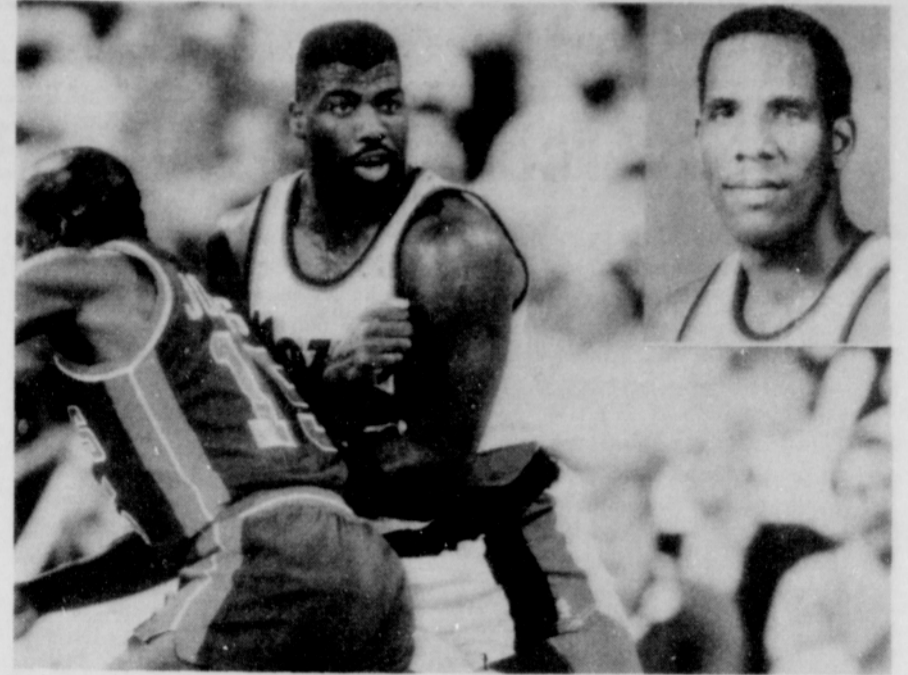
The streets of South Orange, New Jersey have produced a variety of lifestyles, many of them undesirable in the eyes of the law. For a young man, Mark Bryant, power forward/Trailblazers, has seen a lot of life. He talks about how people in his old neighborhood and family fell victims of crime, drugs, and lost hope or stopped chasing their dreams. Bryant knows adversity and pain. He admits that learning from other mistakes helped to elevate him to where he is today, a strong person.

Despite his experiences growing up in the urban jungle, Bryant said that nothing compares to the pain he felt when he learned that Ramon Ramos, his longtime friend and college teammate at Seton Hall, had been critically injured in a car accident.

"There's nothing that can compare with the hurt," he said. "This is by far the greatest tragedy ever in my life. You never know what's going to happen with your life. It can be very short. You just never know when your card is going to come up. Things are going real good for Ramon. He's responding well to treatment and the doctors are real up on him. Actually, he really surprised all of the doctors. Ramon is a big strong fellow. He will be alright."

Ramos remains in serious condition but he has improved slightly and his coma is lightening. According to neurosurgeons, Ramos has a 75 percent chance of regaining awareness over the next two months. If he does that, he has another 75 percent chance to live independently. It is only remotely possible that he will return to the NBA. He remains unaware of his environment, but showing an increasing level of function. He is still unable to respond to verbal commands and does not actively interact with anyone.

This past summer, Bryant and Ramos went head to head for the final spot on the Blazer roster. The battles were classic and their friendship cemented by the intense competition. Both understood that basketball is a business. So, neither took it personal. They spent large amounts of time together, ate together, and more importantly, they dreamed together.



Back in college, both had fantasized about competing against each other in the NBA, but playing on the same team was beyond any expectations. Ramos signed as a free agent with the Blazers and in many ways, Bryant was mostly responsible for him wanting to come to Oregon. He had received a taste of the Pacific Northwest when him college team participated in the Final Four (Seattle - 1988).

Once Robert Reid was waived by the Blazers, both men realized that they were teammates again. The uncertainty of cuts and trades were gone for the moment. The 12 man roster was finally settled. Again, the two of them started to dream. Dreaming about their return to the New Jersey Meadowland, the place where everything started and where they are heroes to many. Mark and the Blazers made the trip January 14th. Ramon did not. The dream of a homecoming was deferred.

"It seemed like a lot of people were looking forward to both of us coming back to New Jersey together," said Bryant. "Everyone was asking about him and many people sent their blessings or prayers to him. It was real hard going back there by myself."

Mark may have been there without his "visionary friend," but he was there in heart. Just like Mark has been there for Ramos' family and for him at his bedside. You can find Mark at the University's Hospital on a regular basis or whenever the team is not on the road.

Wise beyond his twenty four years, Mark Bryant has come advice for procrastinators or people who make excuses for not taking care of business when they are suppose too, especially young people.

"I had to sit down and reflect on my life after this incident," he said. "I said that I'm just going to keep working hard and make sure that I do the best I can all the time. People put off until tomorrow what they can do today. I try to take care of, as much as possible, business today because I might not have the opportunity tomorrow."

**ShortShakes:** Word from my sources in New York suggest that the Knicks are very unhappy with the play of point guard Mark Jackson. Rod Strickland is playing real tough this season. Jackson, apparently, is not a big fan of coach Stu Jackson. Seattle needs a point guard and so does Charlotte. My source suggest that they would like to resolve the tension soon. You heard it here first...

## Organizing Meeting For City-Wide Coalition For Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.

Tuesday, January 30, 7 p.m., King Neighborhood Facility, 4815 NE 7th

You are invited to send a representative to discuss establishing a city-wide coalition to defend Martin Luther King Boulevard.

Whether or not your organization would join such a coalition, please come to share your thoughts and plans for fighting the city ballot measure, which would revert MLK Boulevard to Union Avenue.

Many major civic leaders have spoken out in recent days in support of MLK Boulevard, from the mayor, to the Chamber of Commerce, to the Oregonian, to Black community leaders. But the strength of the petition drive, the outcome of initial (unscientific) polls, and the San Diego experience (which reversed an MLK Boulevard naming by 70%) suggest that we'll need an all-out campaign to defeat the ballot measure on May 15th.

No matter what we think of the city council process in naming Martin Luther King Boulevard, a referendum vote against it will signal rejection of an African-American martyr and a national hero. It will be taken as an insult in the Black community. It will send a message of growing racism in the City of Roses.

We hope you will join us in taking the high road, in defending the memory and dream of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Let us take this opportunity to spread the word of human dignity, social justice and all that Dr. King stood for. Let us show ourselves and the nation that Portland is proud of Martin Luther King.

"I have the audacity to believe that people everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits." Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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### SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE

High school students who are interested in applying for \$1,000 college scholarships should request applications by March 16, 1990 for Educational Communications Scholarship Foundation, 721 N. McKinley Road, Lake Forest, Illinois 60045. To receive an application, students should send a note stating their name, address, city, state and zip code, approximate grade point average and year of graduation. Sixty-five winners will be selected on the basis of academic performance, involvement in extra-curricular activities and need for financial aid.

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