



EDITORIAL / OPINION



Perspectives

What's Going On (Marvin Gaye)

It comes as no surprise. It dates back as far as 1980 when the American voters elected Ronald Reagan as President. Reagan bought with him a group of Cabinet members and advisors that set into motion an ideology that serves as a blueprint for racism in this country today.

Blacks, and other minorities have been targeted for murder, assaults, intimidation, and other forms of harassment.

It happens on and off the job, in private settings, at public gatherings, in the courts, the schools, churches, board rooms, etc.

Be it Southern racism with a snarl or Northern racism with a smile, its meaning is simple and true—RACISM!

And it is happening right here in Portland, Oregon. This beautiful city of so-called peace and tranquility teetering on the brink of economic prosperity has allowed itself to be placed under close scrutiny nationally, as hate capital of the Pacific Northwest.

And all because this city has turned deaf ears to the upsurge in incidents of racism around town of recent.

The death of Mulgeta Seraw, the gay bashing, the cross burnings, the attacks on people of color has been attributed to skinheads, Nazis, and other violent hate groups. But while these groups may be guilty of criminal acts, they most certainly did not introduce racism to Portland. While there may have been interludes of moderation

and inactivity, many Portlanders feel racism was introduced to this town with the first Blacks.

It (racism) subsided somewhat during the era of Governor Tom McCall, Mayor Terry Schruck, County Commissioner Don Clark, Mayor Neil Goldschmidt, and a host of Black community leaders, all of whom lobbied successfully, individually and sometimes together to promote racial equality. They knew this city had a racial problem and addressed it immediately with Affirmative Action. And if ever a finger is pointed as to reasons why the increase in bigotry, those two words are most mentioned.

Affirmative Action was implemented to provide opportunities but it has instead divided the races. And it is to this subject that we devote the first in a series of articles on racism in Portland, Oregon.

The following is an article which appeared in the 1986 edition of the Portland Observer. It is being reprinted because it explains how Affirmative Action got started, its successes and failures, and how the "deck was stacked" in an attempt to dismantle it. It is also being reprinted because, hopefully, the kind of leadership that emerged in the sixties and seventies will step forward once more with an agenda for the nineties. Let us pray that this agenda will be a well balanced plan which will address racism in Portland today. This city does not deserve the reputation it is gaining.

ment established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) whose purpose was to investigate and resolve complaints of discrimination and initiate suits against guilty employers. If discrimination was proven, the government could deny or terminate any federal funds to such employers. But it soon became clear that these limited measures would not correct the problem.

President Johnson responded by issuing Executive Order 11246 in 1965 which called for employers to take Affirmative Action. This meant that employers had to make extra efforts to recruit, hire, and promote minorities so that they could bring the number of minorities in their work force up to the percent of minorities in the local community. Nevertheless, Executive Order 11246 did not go far enough because it relied on the good faith efforts of employers to implement affirmative action. Under the Nixon Administration in 1972, several Amendments were made that strengthened Affirmative Action. A key amendment required that employers keep records of their hiring practices and of the racial and gender composition of their labor force. Based on these data employers could determine whether they were overtly or covertly discriminating against minorities and women. Drawing on such data, employers were to establish Affirmative Action goals, targets, and timetables geared toward correcting the obvious results of employment discrimination. In short, Affirmative Action called for developing concrete action plans which could be scrutinized by employers and the government. This measure had substance because it stipulated that no government contract could be withheld, denied, terminated, or suspended in which a contractor had an affirmative plan unless the employer had deviated substantially from that plan. These measures were extended to educational institutions and had relevancy for minority businesses desiring to receive federal contracts. In the early 1970s it appeared as if the nation was headed in the right direction toward solving serious racial inequality rooted throughout the occupational and educational structures of this country.

OUTCOMES AND SETBACKS
Today, Affirmative Action is under serious attack by the Reagan Administration. An objective analysis of Affirmative Action reveals that it did reduce some of the discrimination painfully experienced by the Black community. For example, Lorenzo Morris, in a study on the plight of Black Americans in higher education found that "more Black Ph.D.'s in virtually every major field graduated between 1974 and

1977 than had ever graduated in American history." Edmund Newton in Black Enterprise points out that when Coleman Young became Mayor of Detroit in 1973 "only 18% of the police force and 8% of the officers were Black." But "the voluntary affirmative action program has raised Black participation in the department to about 32%... with 30% of the lieutenants and 23% of the sergeants now Black." Similarly, Robert Drinan, writing in America reports that "President Carter in four years appointed more Black lawyers to the federal bench than all other presidents taken together had ever done before." Drinan views this as a dramatic example of affirmative action and raised the intriguing question as to "why were not more Black attorneys appointed to the federal bench prior to the Carter Administration?"

Nonetheless, the Reagan Administration along with a number of white litigants have charged that affirmative action is "reverse discrimination." They claimed that Affirmative Action represents a "new racism" because unqualified Blacks are being hired at the expense of qualified whites. They argued that race should not be a factor in employment in a color-blind society. The Reagan Administration also opposed employers being required to keep Affirmative Action records because such paperwork is viewed as too great a burden. It is also claimed that Affirmative Action elevates group favoritism over the rights of individual whites.

Advancing these and similar claims, the Reagan Administration was intent on dismantling Affirmative Action. The threat is serious because the very offices—Attorney General, Assistant Attorney General, Chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and chairman of EEOC—that once promoted Affirmative Action were filled with staunch opponents dedicated to destroying it. Additionally, the Reagan Administration did everything within its power to influence the Supreme Court to overturn Affirmative Action.

The Black community along with other minority groups and women face a challenge in 1986 while they celebrated the first national birthday of Dr. King. They must provide creative action that will keep Affirmative Action intact and strengthen it. The real attack against Affirmative Action is geared toward preventing women, Blacks, and other minority groups from reaching self empowerment, determination, and dignity. The history of the Black movement in this country teaches that this battle can be won. It must be won so that the efforts of Dr. King, Medgar Evers, Fannie Lou Hamer, and thousands of freedom fighters will not have been in vain.

It is difficult to believe that almost twenty years after I designed and taught the first Affirmative Action Course in the Northwest (Portland State University), the administrators of Portland Community College are found swimming in a fetid sea of racism. This comes at a time when the nation is engulfed in mounting tides of discriminatory practices—and when we have Justice Thurgood Marshall saying that "today's Supreme Court is no longer a friend to civil rights."

While the principal examination of this farce by our editor, Leon Harris, appears elsewhere in this edition, I am sufficiently angered by this social recidivism to add my own caustic comments. The stone age climate of this metropolitan campus is so ugly that we are given to wonder just when the baseball bat goons may reappear. As reported both here and in the daily press, an African-American counselor at P.C.C., Haleem Rashaan, has received physical threats both by phone and by mail as he takes the lead in challenging the antebellum, plantation-type orientation of Portland Community College's workforce. His reputation, stature and integrity are intact and his recent national award for educational accomplishments was predicated upon years of effort and commitment to bringing about change in Portland Public Schools. This may be a real problem to the P.C.C. hierarchy—and confederates. This man and the schools African-American Council will receive all of the community support we can muster, white and Black!

The racists in academia do not understand democracy or equality of opportunity, but it has been more than adequately proven that they are cognizant of the vulnerability of their purse strings. We must do all that is possible, and as quickly as possible, to have these tax-supported miscreants pinioned by the same declaration the U.S. Department of Labor issued against Portland State University, October 8, 1988. "You have discriminated against Black and women employees—the university is subject to denial of federal funds by any federal agency for new or renewable contracts." (Do we have your attention?)

The following are some of the recommendations and comments made to the PCC administration as early as October, 1989, none of which have been considered, though these elements are incorporated into some of the even weaker affirmative action

- programs in this area:
- RECOMMENDATIONS**
 - * A current list of ethnic classified, faculty and administrative staff available to serve on screening committees for job openings at Portland Community College.
 - * Development of a list of potential ethnic screening committee members, consisting of individuals external to the college. This group would bring a cultural perspective and expertise to PCC screening committees.

* Portland Community College should establish a mandatory policy (PCC Board Policy) whereby screening committees must have ethnic representation on all professional selection committees.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS
It is impossible for the current affirmative action officer to conduct investigations, address grievances, and provide much needed cultural awareness training without a staff to assist in these activities.

If Portland Community College is committed to affirmative action, having appropriate staff for the affirmative action office is one way to demonstrate a level of sensitivity to this college wide problem.

African-American staff members still question the president's rationale in not having the affirmative action officer a participant in the internal decision-making process (better known as the President's Cabinet).

Finally, the affirmative action officer also had appropriate staff to assist in carrying out the required duties/responsibilities assigned to such an important area.

Soft Money Positions
Currently, there are approximately six full-time ethnic staff members employed by Portland Community College. This consists of one Asian and five African-American employees who have served from six to twelve years.

These individuals have been on soft money during their tenure with the college and it does not appear that a transition into general funding or permanent positions is forthcoming. As ethnic staff members, we are concerned about the lack of opportunity to have these positions put into the general fund and made permanent.

There is another strange matter that will be looked into (among many).

We will look at the relationship between the PCC Affirmative Action Office and the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission.

Affirmative Action: Searching For A Place to Happen

American society was founded on the principle of equality. The Declaration of Independence declared that "we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." This is one of the most profound statements regarding human equality ever written. Yet there has always been a huge gap between American principles and what it actually practices. This has been especially true in regards to Blacks, Enslavement of Afro-Americans had already taken root by the time the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution were written. Some "founding fathers" including George Washington, James Madison, and Thomas Jefferson owned slaves at the very time they wrote those magnificent words proclaiming freedom for humankind. The Constitution itself maintained that Blacks were only three-fifths of a person.

Therefore, from the very beginning, Blacks were denied equal opportunity in the United States. Black slavery lasted for nearly two hundred and fifty years. Shortly after slavery was abolished, Blacks were confronted with another system of inequality—legally enforced racial segregation known as Jim Crow. Racial segregation applied to every aspect of Black life. The law required that Blacks attend separate schools, ride in the back section of public buses, go to the back door of restaurants, use different bathrooms, and the like. Blacks were disenfranchised politically because they could not vote nor did they serve as judges and jurors. In fact, racial segregation denied Blacks due process of law. Jim Crow also shaped the economic life of the Black community. A Jim Crow work force developed. There were "Black" and "White" jobs. Blacks became the sharecroppers, porters, janitors, cooks, maids, domestic servants, and unskilled laborers. Thus, Blacks were crowded into the bottom of the American occupational structure where the pay was low and the work difficult and dirty. Such jobs did not lead to promotions or advancement. Blacks who wanted to burst out of these dead-in jobs could only aspire to become a Black preacher, teacher, undertaker, doctor, or lawyer. But even here only a few slots were available.

The 1963 Birmingham, Alabama confrontation led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth was the key force that generated the 1964 Civil Rights Act from which the idea of Affirmative Action emerged. In the historic battle at Birmingham, demonstrators were attacked by vicious dogs, high pressure water hoses, billy club swinging policemen, and a legal system dedicated to maintaining racial segregation. Yet, on every day between April 3rd and May 10, Blacks demonstrated, sat-in, marched, and went to jail by the thousands while singing "We Shall Overcome" and other Black spirituals. This movement generated such pressure that the racist power holders of Birmingham were forced to concede to the demands of the movement. But Dr. King and the Freedom Fighters were after more than concessions from local Birmingham authorities. They wanted a National Civil Rights Bill from President Kennedy and the federal government that would outlaw all forms of racial inequality.

The movement in Birmingham was so beautifully organized and effective that it generated protest movements throughout the nation. By the end of 1963, protest had

spread from Birmingham to at least 800 cities. John Kennedy, shocked by widespread demonstrations, declared that it was a time to act. On June 19, 1963, Kennedy sent what was to become the 1964 Civil Rights Bill to Congress. President Johnson signed the bill into law on July 2, 1964. It is beyond a doubt, then, that Affirmative Action came as a result of political struggle and sacrifice by the Black masses and concerned White citizens rather than descending from a benevolent government.

For over three hundred and fifty years, Blacks were crippled by a system that was separate and highly unequal. This oppression was backed by white domination consisting of both legal and violent repressions. Lynching was a favorite tool used to keep Blacks in "their place." Between 1882 and 1956 at least 3,440 Blacks were lynched. Moreover, the system of racial segregation was backed by the highest legal authority of the land—the Supreme Court. The Court, in 1896, ruled in the Plessy v. Ferguson case that separate but equal did not violate the U.S. Constitution. Clearly the Supreme Court went on record backing a system of racial segregation that was in fact separate but unequal.

Past and continuing discrimination has had a devastating effect on the Black community. In the 1980s Blacks are still disproportionately crowded at the bottom of the occupational ladder. Black family income is still less than sixty percent of white family income. Blacks are still more than twice as likely to be unemployed as whites. Blacks are still grossly underrepresented at major colleges and universities at both the student and faculty levels. Therefore, the future for Black America is uncertain at best. Affirmative Action was a measure implemented by the federal government to address Black inequality that resulted from tragic proportions of past discrimination and continuing racism deeply rooted in the very fabric of our institutions and daily habits. But why did "affirmative action" come into being in the first place?

ORIGINS OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Affirmative Action resulted from a powerful and creative struggle known as the civil rights movement. This mass movement attacked Black inequality and racial segregation at the core. It mobilized thousands of ordinary and extraordinary Black people who decided to take a clear-cut stand for equality and dignity. These freedom fighters made countless sacrifices by confronting the Ku Klux Klan, White Citizens Councils, local Southern governments, established laws, and the "bull conners." Children, students, and adults, along with the elderly shook off apathy and caution as they became disciplined workers in a movement for freedom anchored on a solid rock—the Black Church.

INTENT OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The 1964 Civil Rights Act banned all forms of discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Titles VI and VII of this bill specifically addressed discrimination in employment. These measures were based on the knowledge that rampant racial discrimination existed in terms of employment. Indeed, because of their conspicuous absence in many jobs, it was clear that members of minority groups were being discriminated against in both federal agencies and the private sector. One intent of the 1964 Act was to correct this discrimination. Thus, the federal govern-

Happy Valentine's Day

Hugs and kisses. Cupid is near. It's the time of year for Valentine cheer. February 14 is St. Valentine's Day, a day set aside as a lovers' festival.

The custom of Valentine's Day has no connection with the two legendary martyrs named St. Valentine whose lives are commemorated on Feb. 14. Popular theories connect the lovers' celebration with the Roman fertility festival of the Lupercalia on Feb. 15 or the mating season of birds.

One long-standing tradition associated with Valentine's Day is the sending of valentine cards. The paper valentine dates from the 16th century, and the valentine may have been the original greeting card.

Hearts are the popular symbol associated with Valentine's Day, but flowers and sweets are among the favorite gifts. This is the busiest day of the year for many florists and candy shops, with requests for red, yellow, white or chocolate roses at the top of the list. **ll**

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Smokers Promote Tolerance

In response to a recent increase in anti-smoking laws, smokers in Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark are banding together to ask politicians and employers for fair consideration and tolerance.

"Smokepeace," a Swedish lobby, and "Henry," a Danish smokers' organization, are two groups in the forefront of the issue. In the last 10 months Smokepeace has attracted 1,500 members, some of whom are non-smokers offended by the discrimination.

Henry, organized two years ago, enlisted the help of pipe-smoking Danish Foreign Minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen last spring in an advertising campaign saying "tolerance and consideration are the basis of living together," according to the Associated Press.

The groups plan to fight discrimination and to lobby against new anti-smoking laws. Just recently, they put together flight guide books about smoking bans on local flights by Finnair and SAS, Scandinavian Airlines System. The airlines extended the smoking ban Nov. 1, 1989, to all of their international flights of less than 100 minutes. **ll**

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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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