



EDITORIAL / OPINION



Perspectives



"Many of you are in college and many more in high school. I cannot over-emphasize the importance of these years of study. You must realize that doors of opportunity are opening now that were not opened to your mothers and fathers. The great challenge you face is to be ready to enter these doors. You must early discover what you are made for, and must work indefatigably to achieve excellence in your various fields of endeavor."

**-Martin Luther King, Jr.
Strength to Love**

I'm sure you're right! But, just how do you do that—motivate, lead, inspire or whatever else is needed to bring forth the will and desire to succeed? Especially when many of the target population are recalcitrant, disadvantaged, sullen and often devoid of identity with either self or with the mores of our super-idealized society.

Every major newspaper of news service supports a pantheon of "guns-for-hire"...independent writers who normally market their column specialties in such areas as science, politics, economics, space, environment, whatever. But these days, more often than not, they appear as a front page lead or in the editorial section as specialists or gurus in educational matters. They join the shrill litany of those who claim to have the "final solution" for failing school systems. Save-Heal-Rescue-Restore-Reinforce-Innovate-Motivate-Reform; even, Reach Out and Touch, yet! Their admonitions and spiels are smooth and quite believable until you remember that 99% of these pedantic adventurers have never taught in a classroom.

Others than this writer have "controversial plans" to put forth (at least

EDUCATION, PART III:

WHITHER SHALL WE TURN?

By Professor Burt McKinley

they are experience-based, in my case). Does the nationwide move toward the "decentralization" of urban school districts have within it a potential for the same decades of litigation and bitter conflict as occurred with the "school desegregation process"? If there is a particular area of this new structure where a major operational disability could soon surface, it is within that all-powerful "local committee"—the key administrative component of the new structuring.

"Under the 'Chicago Plan', a local committee governs each of the 540 schools in the district. Each committee is made up of six parents, two teachers, two community representatives and the school principal—all elected by their peers. High school councils also include an elected student representative. Each elected member is serving a two-year term.

"Despite the long hours necessary to fulfill such responsibilities as setting goals for the school, reviewing the principal's contract, approving curricula and motivating children, parent council members are not paid."

School reformers expect the new program to save millions of dollars and to channel more money into the schools and less into middle management. Now, that last optimistic assessment (among others) is of express concern to me, for I have experienced during my years in industry similar hopeful—if naive—gambits in the direction of economy. If the decentralization of big mainframe computer functions at a national office to a system of scattered minicomputers at branch locations has occurred to you as a viable model for scaling down school district bureaucracies—then consider this.

Highly trained personnel at these "regional" enclaves punch in on their little terminals the very same information that was formerly forwarded to headquarters for entry there at a later date. The saving is in time, duplication and the accuracy of a stream of data (when they are lucky).

In the case at hand, the nation's school districts, we see that "not-so-well-trained groups" composed of the parents, teachers, and community—with no prior experience of working together as a team—are being thrust into an urban maelstrom where the witches' brew is frenziedly stirred by politicians, activists, media, the ambitious, and the frustrated. The dedicated and the competent may eventually persevere, but note that in New York City, which began a similar process twenty years ago, it is only now that the people have gained expectation of extricating themselves from the web of corruption and malfeasance that pervaded the poorly controlled decentralized system.

I am reminded of nothing so much as the "economic opportunity" programs to "raise the quality of life of the poor" which were launched in the 1960s under the "Great Society" banner. Many corporations were formed to employ (and be directed by) the disadvantaged residents of degenerating urban communities. It was only after 95% of these unrealistic exercises in entrepreneurship had failed (with losses in the multi-billions) that the bureaucracy realized it is impossible for any type of enterprise to succeed without a well-trained board of directors to guide the venture. I wish those affected school districts success, but, obviously, I have reservations.

Continued next week.

IF YOU CAN READ THIS COLUMN, THANK A TEACHER

By Ulysses Tucker, Jr

Writer's Note: As an eleventh grader at Roosevelt High School in Washington, D.C., I turned in the following assignment to my English teacher, Ms. Constance Weaver. I found it in my grandmother's basement while going through some old papers and photographs from that period. The assignment was dated March 24, 1974 and is printed in its original form.

"Me"

My name is Ulysses Tucker I was born under the sign of Leo. My height is 6 foot 5 and I weigh 170 pounds. I enjoy Dancing, Music, Reading, Writing, Basketball, Track, Food, Girls, and riding my bike. I like meeting and rapping with people, to find out where their mind is. I like listening to people's problems and try to give advice if I can. Most of the people who meet me, call me crazy, but after awhile they get to know me better and they would say, I thought you were crazy but you're alright. I am myself at all times, I don't put on fronts trying to impress people. If they don't like me the way I am they don't have to like me at all because I'm not going to change, I going to stay me. I also like to be very true to people and I hope they are very true to me. I hate people who smile in our face and run behind your back and talk about you, the Backstabbers that's what you call them. The way I am, if I have something to tell you I'll tell you to your face, I won't run behind your back and talk about you.

The reason for writing about this is, there is so much of this going on around the school. I am not involved in any of this but a lot of my friends are very much into it, I use the term friend loosely because you can't find a good one. I don't mess with a lot of people

around the school, because their are a lot of phony's. The people I deal with have the same ideals that I have, I call them associates not friends, friends are people I just say Hello and Goodbye to. I am a person that can be trusted and if a person can't trust themselves, I won't trust them either. I am just realizing that time is running out, I am getting older each day. After Next year I'll be going out into the world and I am not prepared for it. I'll have to start to get very serious about things. If it weren't for this dream I had, I don't think I would feel this way because I was just rolling along having all kinds of fun, but now I feel there should be change in my life style. I think if everyone felt this way, we would have a better school and better people. I myself, I am going to be a much better person and everyone will notice this...."

As a reader, please check my grammar, spelling, and punctuation. By no means is this the perfect English class essay and yet, I received a perfect grade for this assignment. At the time, I was one confused, unfocused, and emotionally insecure individual. I also stayed in trouble around school and consistently disrupted the classes I did attend. Ms. Weaver's class was no exception. Being the type of person that I was, one who hardly attended class after basketball season or completed assigned homework, it must have come as a total shock to Ms. Weaver. Better still, why did she give me a perfect score? Was she just being nice? Was she attempting to boost my self-confidence and esteem? Did she recognize that I had potential as a student? Lastly, did she see that I had a dream and wanted to be successful in life? I asked myself all of these questions while reflecting and reading the essay sixteen years later. It

was, indeed, the turning point in my life and my best grade in high school to date, outside of gym class. She could have crushed me, my esteem, sense of self, and more with a terrible grade. Based on my performance in her class, I'm very surprised that she didn't crush me. Ms. Weaver saw something change in me and pushed me in a positive direction. I still wonder how she is doing or if she is still teaching in Washington, D.C. I owe her a lot.

Teachers really take a bad rap. I do not know a teacher that enters the profession for the money because if they did, most would probably end up in Computer Science, Engineering or as Doctors and Lawyers. It's not about money. It's about a commitment to helping young people. Teachers are asked to be psychologist, social worker, mother-father figure, disciplinarian, and a host of other roles other skilled professionals are asked not to play. I say ease up on the teachers and give them what they are due. What do lawyers, doctors, engineers, broadcasters, and a host of other professionals have in common? They all come from teachers... I think that teachers have a right to everything they have coming. If parents gave the teachers more to work with in terms of teaching their children self-respect, respect for authority, values, morals and discipline, then perhaps the pressures, stress and demands of teachers won't be so high.

As a professional, scholar, student, or just an everyday working person, I'm confident that there is a teacher you credit for some of your success. On the other hand, I'm sure that there are those who blame past teachers or institutions they attended for their shortcomings.

Well, to them I will only say one thing--"teachers teach and students learn...."

This Week in History

by Angelique Sanders



Quickly now, name a Black governor, judge, surgeon, army commander, or any other Black figurehead in America.

This seems to pose a challenge to most. It would be easier—yet ignorant—to presume Black people just do not accomplish what their pale-faced brethren have. The disconcerting truth is, however, that white society simply does not want to acknowledge the accomplishments of their Black counterparts. History texts will intimate the former: "here's good, white John Smith with his good white wife and good white kids. He grew a record-breaking cotton crop in the nineteenth century." The story behind the story might sound rather like: "'good' John Smith made men of a different color plant, grow, pick, and separate cotton for him, payed them five cents a week while making twenty dollars, and was backed up fully by the white lawyers, judges, and Congress."

The following African Americans—who died or were born the week of April 11-17—have had a positive effect on Black history, and additionally have served to remind people that the contributions of Blacks to society have not been forgotten.

April 14, 1842 is the date of birth for Charles Burleigh Purvis. His father an ardent abolitionist, his mother the founder of the Anti-Slavery Society, Purvis apparently found inspiration in his upbringing, and went on to crusade for impoverished ex-slave health care. He became assistant surgeon in Washington, D.C. during the Civil War era (with only five other Black physicians in the city at the time). He served as the second Black teacher of medicine in an

American University, and was accredited with salvaging medical education at Howard University. Purvis was refused entry into the Medical Society of the District of Columbia and, as the U.S. Senate ignored his pleas to respond, he and several other African Americans formed the National Medical Society of the District of Columbia, and proclaimed: "Science knows no race, color, or condition."

April 16, 1864—This is the birthday of the former lead singer of the Bergen Star Concerts, Flora Batson. Though never formally trained as a singer, Batson received local attention at the age of nine, progressed to national recognition within five years, and was noticed internationally by the age of twenty. Batson furthered the movement toward equality not only with her talent, but through her intelligence. Her interracial marriage caused a stir, but her popularity still raged, even in the South.

April 12, 1885 was the day slaves Jeff and Jennie Walden had their son, Austin Thomas Walden. He received a BA degree and an LL.B., practiced law, commanded Company 1,365th Infantry in France, and served as a trial judge advocate. Law seemed to hold his interest, and as his firm prospered, so did equality. He focused on civil rights bills, and held a high success rate. Some of the cases he fought and won were, for example, a bill that gained equal pay for Black public school teachers, and a bill that allowed Blacks to qualify for Democratic primaries. Walden was also a victor in the battle for peaceful desegregation of lunch counters in Atlanta. The first time African Americans were included in a Georgia Demo-

cratic Convention Delegation, none other than Walden was appointed as delegate. In the two years before his death, Austin Thomas Walden accepted charity law cases free of charge.

April 12, 1913 is the date; Birmingham Alabama is the place. The eventual "King of Vibes", Lionel Hampton, is born. The vibraphonist has "jammed" with the likes of Louis Armstrong, Paul Howard, Benny Goodman, Teddy Wilson, and Gene Krupa. Hampton recently appeared in Portland at the Vintage and Vibes wine-tasting ceremony.

April 13, 1946—Reverend Al Green is born into Forest City, Arkansas. As a singer/songwriter, his hits include "Let's Stay Together", "Back Up Train", "Tired of Being Alone", and "Your Arms Too Short to Box With God." Green sold 30 million records over a five-year period.

April 14, 1976—William Henry Hastie, the first and youngest Black Federal Appeals Judge and Spingarn (NAACP award) winner, dies. Hastie also was the first Black governor for the Virgin Islands, as well as civilian aide to the secretary of war during World War II, and was the first Black Chief Judge a quarter of a century later. Chief of Justice, Warren Burger, found Hastie to be "one of the ablest judges ever to sit on our courts."

Next time you pick up a non-minority newspaper, count the number of pictures of white people, as well as the pictures of Blacks. African Americans are assuredly equal contributors to society...yet still do not receive equal recognition.

On The Way: Equal Rights For People With Disabilities?

"I am a dental assistant—I should say, former dental assistant—who is undergoing chemotherapy for breast cancer. I asked my boss if I could have flex time in order that I could keep my chemotherapy appointments. I was fired!"

A wheelchair user interviewed for a state government position. Although the interviewer said that this applicant had excellent credentials, he did not think that he would be able to get around to the rural area offices. He didn't get the job.

These are two of the 5,000 stories that have been received by a Congressional Task Force on the Rights and Empowerment of Americans With Disabilities. Currently, Congress is considering comprehensive

civil rights legislation for people with disabilities.

It would prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability not only within the federal government and entities who receive federal funds, but by private industry and business establishments as well. The bill covers employment, public accommodations such as restaurants, stores and movie theaters, interstate and intrastate transportation and communications.

Granting civil rights to people with disabilities is an integral part of lessening their dependence on public funds. Jay Rochlin, Executive Director of the President's Committee on Employment of People With Disabilities says, "Federal programs which support depen-

dence currently cost \$57 billion, while only \$3 billion is allotted for programs to promote independence and self-reliance. The actual cost of this dependence is much greater than \$57 billion, since that figure does not account for the taxes that people with disabilities who are out of the work force would pay if they were working and the many other costs of dependency that are now paid for by taxpayers."

Justin Dart, recently appointed by President Bush as Chairman of the President's Committee says, "It is only good business to engage in activities that will return money to the American economy. There are millions of Americans with disabilities who want to do so. They just want the opportunity."

VANTAGE POINT

Articles and Essays by Ron Daniels

The National Malcolm Commemoration Commission is seeking to secure the signatures of 100,00 African Americans on the Declaration which will be used to officially proclaim May 19 as National Malcolm X Day. May 19 is the birthday of Malcolm X and 1990 marks his 65th birthday. National Malcolm X Day will be celebrated annually as a National African American Day of Commemoration. Plans are well underway for the formal National Proclamation Ceremony and Celebration to be held in Omaha, Nebraska, Malcolm's birthplace, on May 19. Local proclamation ceremonies will also take place in a host of cities including: New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, San Francisco and the Bay Area, Chicago and Cleveland, Ohio.

In addition to sponsoring local ceremonies Malcolm X Committees from across the country will also be sending delegations on the "Pilgrimage to Omaha" to be represented at the historic National Proclamation Ceremony. Indeed, as of this writing busloads of participants are preparing to make the Pilgrimage to Omaha from Montgomery, Alabama, Chicago, and Cleveland; and car caravans are being organized from Indianapolis, Indiana, and Peoria, Illinois.

The National Signature Drive, which was officially launched on February 21 at the National We Remember Malcolm observance held in Harlem at Abyssinian Baptist Church, will be intensified with a series of "Malcolm X Saturdays" from April 21-May 12, 1990. These Malcolm X Saturdays will provide a concentrated focus on the effort to reach the goal of 100,000 charter advocates by May 19. The Malcolm X Saturdays will also serve to educate people about the purpose of National Malcolm X Day and would support for the local and national efforts.

The National Proclamation Ceremony in Omaha will be the climactic event in what the African American Progressive Action Network and the National Malcolm X Commemoration commission have designated "1990: The Year of Malcolm X". Three days of activities are planned beginning on Friday, May 18 with a National Malcolm X Forum. Saturday's schedule will include a pilgrimage to the homestead where Malcolm spent his early childhood; a parade through the African American community; the proclamation ceremony and celebration and a benefit fund-raiser. On Sunday the National Commission will host a meeting of representatives of the various Malcolm X Committees to discuss plans for the future.

Persons seeking to participate in the National Signature Drive, or persons seeking information about the Pilgrimage to Omaha should call (202) 722-2694.

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