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Academic Success Seen As Selling Out, Says Study On Blacks

by Prof. McKinley Burt

This recent headline in a number of big city newspapers indicates a possible successor to such media priorities as disposable diapers, spotted owls; Lithuania and the Hubble telescope. Clearly, our print and electronic mentors have shown themselves able to identify those issues important to survival (whose?). Aside from this tongue-in-cheek comment, let us examine the rather serious implications of such a statement.

The most recent example is an article in last Wednesday's San Francisco Chronicle (originated by the N.Y. Times News Service). The study was performed by two anthropologists, a Black female at Rutgers, Signithia Fordham, and an African at U.C. at Berkeley, John U. Ogbu. Critical conclusions range from, "Many Black students may perform poorly in high school because of a shared sense that academic success is a sellout to the white world," to "Fear of acting white and fear of becoming the 'other' was a motivating factor in underachievement in the school context."

"This phenomenon may be one of the subtlest and most insidious among the many social and economic factors that contribute to lower academic performance by Blacks," said Ms. Fordham. Implicit here is a recognition of the very same factors of cultural attrition that I have advanced the past few weeks. Nothing "genetic", as we have documented—nothing which can be distinguished (except in time) from the processes that brought about the description "inferior" in reference to early white immigrants before they were allowed to "melt" into the American Dream.

Along with academic success, the study listed more than a dozen other

types of behavior that the students considered to be "acting white." These included, speaking standard English, listening to so-called white music, going to the opera or ballet, studying in the library, going to the Smithsonian Institution, doing volunteer work, camping or hiking and being on time. It is rather scary, I think, to contemplate that these youths will soon be parents; I'm sure it occurs to you that there is an adult group of Blacks who have been turned off in the same fashion. Let us examine this issue through other eyes.

Newspaper Excerpt:

James Comer, a professor of child psychiatry at Yale University, said black youths internalize messages about being black that are transmitted by society.

He said fear of "acting white" could be a factor among "non-mainstream-oriented poor black children," but not among middle-class black children.

On the other hand, Wade Nobles, director of the Center for Applied Cultural Studies and Educational Achievement at San Francisco State University, said black underachievement in education cuts across socioeconomic lines.

If fear of "acting white" does play a role, Nobles said, it comes in a context in which "black children learn relatively early that their attempt to achieve is not rewarded in the school system."

At high schools like Capital High School in Washington, the one studied by Fordham and Ogbu, teachers and students tended in interviews to express far more concern about the larger socioeconomic factors that bear on academic performance.

It is important to note that some educators have taken pointed exceptions to the conclusions of the study—or have downplayed the significance. Bill Bib-

biani, director of research and testing for the Pasadena United School District in California has the following comment: "hard-working students of all races have been taunted as grinds and nerds—I don't know that Black people have cornered the market on teasing people about academic achievement." The Chronicle article was careful to point out that Mr. Bibbiani is white.

Well, that is another perspective to deal with for the Black engineers and scientists I described last week as being terribly concerned about the horrendous failure rate for minority engineering students (78%); it is Dr. Decatur Rogers, Dean of the School of Engineering, Tennessee State University whom I quote. "While, it is not that educators in affected schools across the country are failing to perceive this problem, more of them (from my experience) need to direct countervailing activities toward the acculturation required for economic and professional success in America.

I am aware of some activity in this direction under pressure of the Portland School District's "Desegregation Program". But this is due as much (if not more so) to individual initiatives on the part of "teachers of excellence"; interaction with the symphony, Center for Performing Arts, OMSI, the Firehouse Theatre, and similar cultural enterprises. I am immediately reminded, however, that the Black Educational Center pioneered this kind of activity almost twenty years ago. It takes a committed administration, not one who must be dragged kicking and screaming into the race for survival. Certainly, not one that has just cut back the related specialists to half-time.

Video Presentation Produced To Recruit Minorities To Education

The University of Oregon College of Education in partnership with Eugene District 4-J schools is developing a multimedia video presentation entitled "Teaching Can Be For You" to help recruit minority students to careers in teacher education.

The presentation, which depicts Lane County minority teachers and administrators speaking about their own education and careers and working with students in the classroom, will be used by the Diversity in Education Consortium as part of a minority education recruitment program.

The consortium was formed to recruit and retain more minorities in teacher education and includes representatives from the UO College of Education, Lane Community College and Lane County schools.

The video is the first recruitment tool that the consortium has created, according to Kathy Pyfer, UO College of Education adviser and an executive officer of the consortium.

"In Lane County, there aren't very many teachers or administrators of color," Pyfer said. "The problem is, if you don't ever see someone who looks like yourself in a leadership position, you don't ever aspire to that particular leadership position."

"The first goal (of the video) is to provide a vehicle for students to observe people of diverse ethnic backgrounds in leadership roles," Pyfer said.

A second goal of the presentation is

to give minority students professional objectives so that they finish high school and go on to college even though they might not remain in teacher education, according to Pyfer.

Pyfer conceived the idea for the video along with Anselmo Villanueva, Minority Community Liaison for Eugene District 4-J and consortium member. Pyfer received a \$1,000 grant from the UO College of Education Alumni Association to develop the presentation.

The consortium hopes to adapt a model program in Portland, the Portland Teacher Program, to the Eugene Area. In Portland, 15 minority students a year enter Portland Community College in a program that includes tuition waivers along with retention and mentorship programs. The retention program focuses on orientation to college, study skills and test-taking skills.

After two years at PCC the students transfer to Portland State University with a continuation of the retention programs and tuition waivers.

"We are working on making all that happen down here, but we need to recruit the students in the first place," Pyfer said. "The slide show is a recruitment tool in order to start the minority students thinking about entering the field of teacher education."

The consortium hopes to have 15 students start at LCC in the fall of 1991 under a similar program and transfer to the University of Oregon after two years.

The 12-minute presentation, produced

by Ursi Reynolds, UO doctoral student in curriculum and instruction, consists of slides, narrative and original music transferred to videotape for portability and ease of presentation.

The story line of the presentation focuses on a Eugene high school student, Melissa Davis, as she meets with minority educators at various Lane County schools and the university. The narrative features Davis and Eugene District 4-J staff members Rapheal Mosqueda, Jefferson Middle School teacher; Misa Joo, Madison Middle School teacher; and Bob Bolden, Kennedy Middle School assistant principal.

This fall, the video will be shown to Lane County middle and high school minority students by school counselors. Teachers and administrators of color will be present during the presentations.

The students then will observe and help these teachers and administrators in their classrooms and offices. Students who become interested in teacher education will be assigned teacher or administrator mentors to assist and counsel the students.

Ultimately, the consortium plans to make the presentation available, at no cost, to schools throughout Oregon. Because of the format, other schools will be able to insert easily pictures of their own minority educators into the slide/video presentation.

Community Trust Changes Name To Meyer Memorial Trust

Trustees of the Fred Meyer Charitable Trust announced they are changing the name of the philanthropic organization to Meyer Memorial Trust, effective today.

Chairman Oral B. Robertson said the name change was intended to end confusion between the trust and Fred Meyer, Inc.

"Many people mistakenly believe that the trust is the philanthropic arm of the Fred Meyer retail stores," Robertson said.

Since its inception in 1982, the trust has been a private, independent foundation representing the personal philanthropy of the late Fred G. Meyer, not a company foundation related in any way to Fred Meyer Inc.

"What we do share is the same founder, who strongly believed in giving something back to the communities which supported his company for so many years," Robertson said. "From that philosophy, the trust was born."

When Meyer died in 1978, he left the bulk of his estate to create a charitable trust. The bequest consisted mainly of stock in Fred Meyer Inc., according to Charles S. Rooks, executive director of Meyer Memorial Trust.

Assets in the trust have grown from \$120 million in 1982 to more than \$275 million in 1990, he said. In eight years, the trust has awarded more than \$77 million in grants to communities in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Alaska, Montana, Utah and California. The bulk of the grants have been awarded in Oregon.

In 1989, the trust awarded \$15.2 million in grants for social welfare, arts and humanities, education, health and other organizations.

These have ranged from a \$654,000 grant to Albina Ministerial Alliance for an elementary school program for at-risk children, to a \$1,500 grant to the city of Ashland to purchase a piano for its multi-purpose community center.

United Way Funds Child Care Center

Seventy-two children in Northeast Portland previously enrolled at St. Vincent de Paul Child Development Center will continue to receive money for child care under an agreement reached between United Way of the Columbia-Willamette and Albina Ministerial Alliance.

Up to \$30,000 will be available to the families of these children through June 30. AMA will manage the distribution of the funds and is in the process of contacting families to offer assistance in meeting their child care expenses.

The center closed Feb. 28 because of financial difficulties after operating for nearly 51 years. Most parents were paying the minimum fee of \$160 each month at St. Vincent de Paul and found their child care expenses increasing an additional \$100 to \$200 per month at other facilities.

United Way board chairman Jerry Halverson said that funds previously allocated to St. Vincent de Paul (\$162,151 in 1989-90) would remain in Northeast Portland to meet child care needs in the future. He added that no decision has been made on how the money will be spent.

Minority Business Owners Hold Annual Conference

The Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs is holding its 1990 OAME Entrepreneurship Conference at the Lloyd Center Red Lion on May 15.

Workshop topics include imaging; advertising, sales and marketing; business planning; financial planning; insuring and bonding; technology updates;



doing government business; franchising and strategic planning.

Anyone starting a business, or wanting to increase business opportunities should attend the conference, which will also provide networking possibilities between minority entrepreneurs and purchasing and contracting officers of business and agencies wishin to contact minority-owned businesses.

Highlights of the conference include: Morning speech by US WEST Communications Vice President and CEO/ Small Business Services, Solomon Trujillo.

McDonald Corporation and Southland Corporation presentation on franchising.

Networking at 4:00 p.m. will involve purchasers and buyers from Ore-



providing the networking music. Oregon Congressman Ron Wyden will deliver the luncheon speaker introduction, followed by the keynote speech



by Parren J. Mitchell, retired U.S. Representative from Maryland's seventh district.

To register for the conference, luncheon and reception, call OAME at (503) 236-1190.

Program Outline

Registration	8:00-9:00 a.m.	Work Session III	1:45-2:45 p.m.
Opening Session	9:00-9:30 a.m.	• Insurance & Bonding—Can You Get It?	
Work Session I	9:30-10:30 a.m.	• Doing Business with the Largest Buyer in the World: Government	
• Imaging		• Franchising	
• Finance & Financial Planning for the Business Owner. Part I.			
• Using Today's Technology		Break	2:45-3:00 p.m.
Break	10:30-10:45 a.m.		
Work Session II	10:45-11:45 a.m.	Work Session IV	3:00-4:00 p.m.
• Finance & Financial Planning for the Business Owner. Part II.		• Using Today's Technology	
• Advertising, Sales & Marketing		• Strategic Planning—1990's	
• Business Planning		• Advertising Sales and Marketing	
Luncheon	11:45 a.m.-1:45 p.m.	Hosted Networking Reception	4:00-7:00 p.m.
Introduction—Congressman Ron Wyden		Music by Ron Steen	
Keynote speaker—Parren J. Mitchell		Public and private industry buyers and purchasers meet with minority manufacturers, suppliers, construction, service & retail firms. Make contacts!	
		Networking Session A Must!	

Task Force Recommends Programs To Reduce Infant Mortality Rates In N/NE Portland

The statistics are alarming. Each year in Multnomah County, nearly 100 infants die before their first birthday. Statewide, almost 10 percent of women giving birth do not receive sufficient prenatal care. That figure doubles among women in the North/Northeast section of Portland.

On April 23, 10:00 a.m., the North-Northeast Economic Development Task Force presented its report (with action plan and recommendations) to reduce infant mortality in North/Northeast Portland.

The report was developed by the Family Services Committee of the Task Force. Information included in the report was obtained during a series of forums with health professionals oper-

ating in or serving residents of North/Northeast Portland. The recommendations respond to the causes of infant mortality among low-income residents.

Support for the health care forums was provided by the Black United Front of Oregon, the Albina Ministerial Alliance, the United Way of the Columbia-Willamette, and the Oregon Community Foundation.

Present at the press conference were Amina Anderson and Cornetta Smith, co-chairs of the Family Services Committee of the North-Northeast Task Force; representatives of local health providers; a representative of the United Way; and a representative of the Oregon Community Foundation.

Mail-In Swim Lesson Registration Started

Swim lessons will be given indoors at: Columbia Pool, 7701 N. Chautauqua; metropolitan Learning Center Pool, 2033 NW Glisan; PCC Sylvania Pool, 12000 SW 49th.

Outdoor pool summer 1990 swim

lessons will be given at: Creston Pool, SE 44th and Powell; Dishman Pool, 77 NE Knott; Grant Pool, 2300 NE 33rd; Montavilla Pool, 8219 NE Glisan; Mt. Scott Pool, 5530 72nd; Peninsula Pool, 6400 N. Albina; Pier

Pool, N.Seneca & St. Johns; Sellwood Pool, SE 7th & Miller; and Wilson Pool, 1151 SW Vermont.

Children and adults interested in Portland Parks and Recreation's swim lesson program this summer can reg-

ister by mail beginning in mid-May. To receive information and registration forms at your home, send a self-addressed, stamped legal-size envelope to Aquatics, Portland Parks and Recreation, 1120 SW 5th Avenue, Room 502, OR 97204-1976.