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"The Eyes and Ears of The Community"

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Science! Are Blacks Still Driving Miss Daisy?

by Professor McKinley Burt

Many years ago in the ghetto of urban cities African Americans frequently exchanged a cynical greeting passing, "Hi man, still drivin' Miss Ann?" Ann Daisy - What's in a name? What the short, cursory query signified was that all of the populace of color thoroughly understood a basic American truism that was equally as often voiced, "Yeah! White folks still in the lead." The allusion to Blacks doing the chauffeuring while others leaned back, relaxed in relative comfort and status, had the literal meaning of supporting a large sector of the infrastructure with ones labor, commitment or genius without ever receiving just due, compensation or recognition.

It is just such a denigrating role that conceals the true and massive contribution of African Americans to the "science and technology" that created the nations industrial might-as well as its strides in the health sciences, transportation, space exploration and other fields that are deemed to require the highest level of cognitive abilities. And it is not just that lack of a fair compensation, but the denial of "just due and recognition" that has made it so difficult to find minority role models. This is terribly important as we come upon the year 2000 and what we are told will be an age where only the scientifically literate or the technically proficient will be able to "make it."

While an immediate consideration is our youth and developing/demanding an educational structure that will equip them to compete (even smile) in such a "brave new world" - Blacks can no longer avoid confrontation with the threat to their economic welfare posed by the conversion of relatively unskilled jobs to "automation." This point can best be made by referring to historical model-

not too long ago. For many, many decades the nation's railroads were close to being the largest employers of African Americans in the nation; In the supporting structures of track maintenance and in locomotive and car repair; In the service ranks where Blacks almost exclusively were the pullman porters, dining car waiters and cooks; In some parts of the country they were the fireman on the locomotives (until the backbreaking job of shoveling coal to the boilers was eliminated by the new technology of the diesel).

The same can be said for the meat packing industry, for the vegetable oil refining industry and for the vast river barge transportation networks of the mid-south and delta. New techniques of welding, the introduction of "container shipping," new materials were developed through advances in metallurgy and ceramics, scientific programming and production control-all of this worked to displace fairly unskilled members of America's workforce. Some how African Americans "appeared" to have survived the massive dislocations and have made a credible transition within the framework of economic survival. But, given the present economic situation of the majority of their children and grandchildren-what we euphemistically refer to as that vast "underclass" living at or below the "poverty line"-can we really say that there was a successful transition, or are we looking at the inevitable consequence?

Obviously, it is absolutely necessary that we immediately assess the current situation in terms of this recent past. As more and more of the "smoke stack industries" close down (where large numbers of Blacks are employed in automotive and steel production), and increasingly consumer goods manufacturing is transferred overseas, and the domestic workforce is assailed from every quarter as "educationally unpre-

pared" to compete in this brave new world of science and technology-can African Americans once again "play it by ear" and assume that somehow they will muddle through, and that a benevolent government will design and implement all of the economic and social structures upon which survival will depend? Or is it more likely that they will be driven (at last) to develop their own educational, scientific and technology structures in order to compete with others in America's pluralistic society; that "melting pot" never did materialize, did it? At least not for people of color.

If we accept that such "self-direction" is the only meaningful objective for a people serious at last about their survival, then, early on, the mission has to be about education, training, and motivation. Earlier here we have said that the disparaging role of "driving Miss Daisy" served to conceal "the true and massive contribution of African Americans to the science and technology that created the nation's industrial might." So, where I described the many key areas of industry where African Americans had a substantial role, keep in mind that it is from these ranks (and frequently unlettered) that the Black Inventors of America Sprang-the men and women of color whose innovative contributions to the world's science and technology changed the industrial and human landscape for all time to come! But Blacks did not develop any parallel structure to exploit these accomplishments. We may suppose that they thought they had been "integrated," and that the benefits would trickle down in equal proportion.

Next week we will examine institutions needed to combine these historical lessons into a mode of education, economics and motivation that could ensure African American survival. No more "Miss Daisy."

The Vanport Flood: A Special Focus

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Author of "How to Survive When You're the Only Black in the Office" to appear in Portland

Earl McClenney, Jr. author of *How to Survive When You're the Only Black in the Office* will appear in Portland on June 2nd, at the Inn at the Coliseum, 10 N.E. Weidler.

The Author's visit is being sponsored by Donnie's Accessories Plus and African American Books.

An Autograph session has been scheduled for promotion of the book at Donnie's Accessories Plus 925 N.E. Broadway, Portland, 2:30 P.M.-4:30 P.M.

Cost of the event is \$25.00 which includes the dinner banquet, scheduled for 7:30 P.M., and a social hour at 6:30 P.M.

'What they don't teach'

In language he normally uses behind closed doors, Earl H. McClenney says he's written a book for young black men so they can learn 'how to stay alive in a hostile environment.' The white, male-dominated office is a tough place for black males to succeed, the VSU dean asserts, especially when self-discipline is missing.

by Martha Wild
Special correspondent

His book is directed at black men stranded in an office full of white people.

The language is jolting with its use of four-letter words. Yet, with help of quotations from the Bible and Koran, Earl H. McClenney Jr.'s message is clear: self-discipline is the key to a black man's survival, no matter what the company of business or business is.

"You can't be successful just by being a good accountant," McClenney said. "You need to be a good person."

In *How to Survive When You're the Only Black in the Office - What They Can't Teach You at White Business Schools*, McClenney says he has writ-

ten up the advice he's been offering to his government students at Virginia State University, where he is an assistant professor. Separate chapters deal with parents, children, religion, politics, racism, civic activities, how to handle bosses, hunting and physical fitness.

"You can't be competent on the job 8 to 5 and not be competent after 5," he said. "You can't allow yourself to think you can have lower standards off the job than on the job."

McClenney, 47, said he hopes the 212-page book will instill in young black men the need to have the one distinguishing characteristic between people who succeed and people who don't succeed.

Self-discipline, he said, includes staying away from affairs with women, either black or white, at the office and staying away from alcohol at the office party. On-the-job romance is distracting at best, he said, and can be destructive to the young black man's career.

McClenney recalled that as the personnel interviewer for the city of Richmond in the mid-1960s, he was tested. A white woman whom he did not know called his home repeatedly and expressed an interest in getting involved with him. By politely asking her to leave him alone, he believes he passed the test.

Black managers and employees alike need to foster a "killer instinct" and maintain the safe distance of a working relationship, he said. That safe distance will allow a person the freedom to confront a difficult situation later and to fire someone if the need arises.

Initial reaction to McClenney's book has focused on the language, which he said is the same he uses in counseling sessions with his students.

"You first of all have to establish a basis of communication," he said. "It

was a conscious decision on my part to write the way I talk privately" to students.

What surprises McClenney is that people often comment on the four-letter words without mentioning the large number of quotes from the Bible and the Koran throughout the book, McClenney encourages his readers to study and practice the teachings of their religion and to live by strict codes of moral conduct.

"In with the recent mail that contains a lot of nasty stuff are letters from blacks who also want to get books published," McClenney said. "They want to know if I can help."

Even though his book is directed at young black males, McClenney insists the content applies to anyone in the working world. In addition to teaching others the basic principles of survival, he would like to see white managers use the book as "a sensitivity training tool."

Still, McClenney believes young black men need to hear his message more than their white and female counterparts because they are having a harder time surviving in the office.

He believes that white men, who are usually in control of the office, are intimidated by their belief that the black man is physically stronger. This fear is the basis for racism in the office and means the black man has to try even harder than the white man if he is going to succeed.

"White men don't have to have as much on the ball to succeed," McClenney said.

The disadvantage for black men begins early in their lives, McClenney said. He cites the small number of black male teachers as a problem for young black males, particularly for those who are being raised by young, single black mothers.

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Drugs, Deaths and Oregonians

The report *Deaths Due to Drugs and Alcohol, 1988* has been published by the Oregon Health Division and is now available. While the report represents just one small facet of alcohol and other drug abuse in Oregon, the report quantifies the most serious consequence of substance abuse--death.

During 1988, 495 Oregonians were reported to have died as a direct result of the immediate or long term physical effects of alcohol or other drugs. While the number of deaths and death rate (18.1 per 100,000 population) are record highs, these values are only marginally above those recorded for the previous high in 1981. One in 50 Oregonians who died in 1988, died directly as a consequence of alcohol or other drug use. (Abuse of these substances also contributed to many unintentional and intentional injury deaths.)

Hearings on Welfare Reform Scheduled

The public will have an opportunity to voice its opinion about the state's new welfare reform plan during a series of public hearings scheduled for four cities.

"These hearings will provide a forum for the public and advocate groups to get a full explanation of how welfare reform will be implemented," stated Sandie Hoback, welfare reform manager, Adult & Family Services Division. "This is a complex program that will make a number of important changes in how the welfare system functions. We urge the public to attend the meetings, and provide us with feedback on our plan for the program's operation and its budget."

The hearings will be held in the following cities, beginning at 7 p.m.:

- Salem May 29 Room 116 Bldg. 3 Chemeketa Community College
- Bend May 31 Hitcock Auditorium Central Ore. Community College
- Medford June 4 Courthouse Auditorium 10 S. Oakdale

While the rates of alcohol and other drug deaths were little changed during 1980-1988, two important counter-trends have continued to evolve. Deaths due to alcohol have declined while those due to other drugs have increased. In 1980, 65.3 percent of all drug and alcohol-caused deaths were attributed to alcoholic liver disease or cirrhosis but by 1988 the percentage declined to 46.9; the death rate fell from 11.2 to 8.5 per 100,000 population. At the same time the non-alcohol drug death rate increased two-fold.

The 37 page report lists individual deaths by cause, age, sex, and county of residence. To obtain a copy of the report, write to the Oregon Health Division's Center for Health Statistics, PO Box 116, Portland, Oregon 97207.

Portland June 5 Terrell Hall, Cascade Campus, Portland Community College

One hearing has already been held in Eugene. According to Hoback, people attending that meeting expressed concerns over budget constraints for the program and presented alternative methods for handling budgetary decisions.

Welfare reform is required by a federal law passed in 1988. Oregon's welfare reform program, dubbed "JOBS For Oregon's Future," will be implemented in October 1990. It provides education and training for welfare recipients, to prepare them for jobs which lead to financial independence. The program will be tailored to communities across the state, with local planning boards making many decisions about the local program content.

The state's welfare system is administered by the Adult & Family Services Division of the Department of Human Resources.

Tri-Met Seeks Fare Increase

Tri-Met fares will go up a nickel next September, if the Tri-Met Board of Directors approves an ordinance due to be introduced at its meeting next week. Action on the proposal is scheduled for June 27.

Tri-Met General Manager James E. Cowen said the proposed increase, which would yield an additional \$950,000 per year, would reflect inflation since the last Tri-Met price increase.

Most discount tickets and cash fares would increase a nickel, with monthly passes increasing \$2, except the Honored Citizen monthly pass for seniors, which would increase \$1 from \$7.50 to \$8.50.

"There has not been an across-the-board fare increase in five years," Cowen said. "It's impractical to raise transit fares a penny at a time; we're pretty much limited to increases of at least a nickel." He said the proposal would help catch up with inflation over the last five years.

Cash fares were last increased in September 1985. Tri-Met raised the price of discount tickets and passes in September 1987. A new simplified fare system, introduced in September 1988, left most fares unchanged, but extended senior citizen discounts, lowered fares for some long-distance travelers and levied a nickel increase for 20 percent of Tri-Met's passengers.

"We need to get to a program of periodic fare increases," Cowen said. "It shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone that transit operating costs increase, just as the cost of everything else does." Tri-Met's Citizen Advisory Committee on the Budget recommended to the board last month that Tri-Met adopt a fare policy that included periodic adjustments. Cowen said he would recommend a fare policy study to the board in July.

Local Educators and Engineer to Conduct Workshop on African American Baseline Essays in Minneapolis

Three African-Americans from Portland have been selected by the Minneapolis School District to conduct a workshop in that city on June 8-9, 1990.

Halim Rahtsaan, Counselor, Portland Community College (Cascade), Joyce Harris, Principal, Black Education

Center, and Kamau Anderson, Engineer with U.S. Corps of Engineers, were invited by members of the school district after giving presentations at the

National Black Educators Conference which was held in Portland last November.

The three presenters will conduct workshops on an explanation of the "Portland Model" and Restructuring Curriculum/Content and Process.

Also scheduled is a workshop at the African American Zion Church in Minneapolis before church members and community activists.