



EDITORIAL/NATIONAL FORUM



VANTAGE POINT

Articles and Essays by Ron Daniels

As the world celebrates the release of Nelson Mandela, and the beginning of talks aimed at starting serious negotiations to abolish apartheid in South Africa, the situation of African Americans continues to deteriorate. All across America a veritable epidemic of racial assaults is being unleashed against Black people at all levels. The drug crisis has provided a veil of legitimacy for growing police harassment, terror and murder in African American communities. Racial incidents on college campuses are mounting, and racial attacks of the kind which occurred at Howard Beach and Bensonhurst are becoming increasingly more commonplace.

This alarming resurgence of racism and racial violence is unfolding within a climate where affirmative action and the gains of the sixties are also under attack. From the Supreme Court to the halls of congress there are forces at work which are determined to turn back the clock. There appears to be a prevailing view in white America that African Americans, with all their elected officials, prominent television personalities, actors, athletes and corporate executives have made it. As a consequent of this misperception, there is a decided lack of national will to press forward with a national civil rights and human rights agenda.

There are increasing signs, however, that African Americans do not intend to become passive victims of this latest outbreak of anti-Black racist antagonism. A growing African American revolt against racism appears to be brewing. Recently Prof. Derek Bell from the prestigious Harvard Law School announced that he was voluntarily leaving the faculty, and would not return until the Law School hired a Black woman to the faculty. Prof. Bell who is widely respected as one of the leading scholars and intellectuals in America was aiming his protest at the kind of tokenism which has become the pattern at most colleges and universities in the United States. Supreme Court Decisions over the past decade have served to undermine affirmative action

and lessen an already feeble commitment on the part of many universities to implement strong affirmative action policies.

In taking his stand, Prof. Bell is in effect risking occupational death. His career is on the line. But Prof. Bell declared that, "I cannot continue to urge students to take risks for what they believe if I do not practice my own precepts". It is precisely this type of courage which is required by Black men and women to inspire our people to fight back against racism and the blatant attempts to beat back Black progress.

Though Prof. Bell's stance received national notice, another action by Black students at Temple University did not make national headlines. During the last week of April a late evening melee erupted at Temple when some white members of fraternity falsely accused a group of Black students of kicking in the door of their fraternity house. The white students attacked the Black students with baseball bats and 2" by 4" planks. When the campus police arrived the Black students were hit with billy clubs and herded into paddy wagons as if they were the ones guilty of precipitating the incident. Five white students were eventually arrested, but not of them were subjected to beatings with billy clubs, handcuffed or thrown into paddy wagons. A few of the Black students had to be treated for cracked ribs and broken arms.

Black student organizations and leaders came together in a united front to demand an apology from the university and further that charges be brought against the police officers for police brutality. A number of other grievances were also raised. When the President of the university refused to meet with them or respond to their demands, the Black students and some Latino, Asian and white supporters took to the streets, more than 1,000 strong. They blocked every major access road to the university in a massive act of civil disobedience. With this courageous stand, the students at Temple University joined the growing revolt against racial oppression.

OPINION

It's Time to Put an End to Workplace Discrimination

By Rep. Donnie Gedling

Imagine this scenario. You are interviewing for a job. You have all the right credentials and come highly recommended. The interviewer is impressed. You are asked if you smoke. You do. The interview is over. This company does not hire smokers, no matter how well-qualified.

Unfortunately, this is not just a hypothetical situation. It happens every day, all over the country. And this treatment is not limited to people who smoke. Such unfair practices also may be applied to a person who plans to start a family, an overweight person, those who consume alcoholic beverages or even one who races motorcycles as a hobby. More and more, people are fired or not hired at all because of activities, hobbies or events related to their personal lives.

If you think this smacks of discrimination, you are right. And many legislators, including myself, agree. In the past two years, five states — Virginia, Oregon, Tennessee, Colorado and Kentucky — and several city councils have enacted legislation designed to protect employees from non-work-related discrimination. A number of other states, including Delaware and Rhode Island, are presently considering such legislation.

Some of the laws contain a number of privacy issues — prohibiting employers from subjecting employees or job applicants to lie-detector tests, genetic screening, psychological stress tests or unwarranted breathalyzer testing — and some are more specific — prohibiting employers from requiring workers or job applicants to abstain

from using tobacco products on or off the job.

But the premise is the same: Employee privacy needs to be respected and protected. We cannot have employers dictating what legal activities or social values, particularly those relating to a worker's non-working hours, are acceptable.

This point was brought home in a recent survey of 1,007 adults by the National Consumers League. The vast majority of survey respondents felt prospective employers have no right to ask questions about, among other things, plans to have children, smoking off the job, or off-the-job activities or hobbies. And respondents overwhelmingly found it inappropriate for an employer to refuse to hire an overweight person, refuse to hire a smoker or require an employee to stop smoking, or require an employee or applicant to change diet.

America's workers don't want employers deciding how they should live their lives within our nation's legal framework. And legislators cannot and should not stand idly by while they do it. While many Americans view laws as restrictive, this is one instance where laws are necessary to help keep this nation free.

But I think it's a sad statement that legislation is even needed to ensure that employees are guaranteed the fundamental rights of individuals that we always believed were protected by our state and federal constitutions. ■

State Rep. Gedling is a member of the Kentucky House of Representatives.

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Perspectives

by Professor McKinley Burt

More Adventures in Learning: Portland State University

I took this faculty position for one semester in 1971 and remained for ten years; teaching, designing curriculum and implementing innovative techniques that eventually spread throughout the university. A notable example was my "Affirmative Action Workshop," the first college-accredited course of its kind in the Pacific Northwest. But it began "off-campus" as a three-day workshop for U.S. Forest Service personnel of the 19 regional forests scattered around the Northwest and Alaska.

At first just a government consultant, I became "Instructor of Record" after acquiring university status, and was able to award credit hours to "students" attending this traveling classroom on mountain tops, at resorts and Indian reservations, and at remote towns on the Canadian border. Teaching conventional courses on campus three days a week, I spent the remainder at sessions and in helicopters, 4-wheel drives and on Air Oregon Flights. Word of the course soon spread around the downtown campus where it was not available, and people were driving hundreds of miles to participate. There was great interest in the Portland business community where there was tremendous pressure to become well versed in "E.E.O.C." law (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission). Their negotiations secured my course a permanent place in on-campus curriculum and a listing in the school catalog.

Another element of my learning curve in this new (to me) "industry" of education, was the financial ramifications of the growing interface between institutions of learning, the business community, and governmental agencies. It did not take long for me to become aware of the ten of thousands of dollars that would be generated by these activities in student fees—often supported by employer subsidies for staff training.



Professor McKinley Burt

And that, after my salary and expenses, a learning game.

There was an interesting and productive spinoff to all this, especially for African American students. Ninety-five percent (95%) of the enrollment was white and the evening classes involved management and other personnel from such local firms as Tektronix, Esco, U.S. Bank, First National Bank, United Parcel, Omak, etc., and many of the federal, state and city agencies. At break-time these people would encounter minority students in the cafeteria and, after a brief conversation, schedule them for an interview the very next day—or in some cases they were hired on the spot. By the end of the first year minority and white female students were enrolling in droves.

Another innovative approach I used to ensure the successful delivery of a needed educational product was the design mode used for a three-semester course, "Black Economic Experience." I will not begin a description until next week for I believe the story can be best told in a cohesive narration. Suffice to say, it was a multi-disciplinary approach and was simultaneously accepted for credit by "History, Business, Minority Studies, Urban Studies and Sociology." I will have more to say then on the need to design curriculum beyond the current arbitrary constraints of traditional nomenclature, and to fit it, instead, to the realities of life as it is encountered.

CREED OF THE BLACK PRESS
The Black Press believes that America can best lead the world away from social and national antagonisms when it accords to every person, regardless of race, color, or creed, full human and legal rights. Hating no person, fearing no person, the Black Press strives to help every person in the firm belief that all are hurt as long as anyone is held back.

The Portland Observer:
Reflecting Community Pride

PORTLAND OBSERVER

(USPS 959-680)

OREGON'S OLDEST AFRICAN-AMERICAN PUBLICATION
Established in 1970

Alfred L. Henderson
Publisher
Gary Ann Garnett
Business Manager

Joyce Washington
Operations Manager
Leon Harris
Editorial Manager

PORTLAND OBSERVER
is published weekly by
Exie Publishing Company, Inc.
4747 N.E. M.L.K., Jr. Blvd.
Portland, Oregon 97211
P.O. Box 3137
Portland, Oregon 97208



(503) 288-0033 (Office) * FAX #: (503) 288-0015

Deadlines for all submitted materials:

Articles: Monday, 5 P.M. -- Ads: Tuesday, 5 P.M.

POSTMASTER: Send Address Changes to: Portland Observer, P.O. Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208.

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Subscriptions: \$20.00 per year in the Tri-County area; \$25.00 all other areas.

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1990 Virginia Slims Women's Opinion Poll:

Twenty Years of Women's Attitudes — And Then Some

By Liese Cochran
PM Editorial Services

You've heard the lament, "Men — can't live with 'em; can't live without 'em." And according to a recent national poll, women still think this is true. The majority of today's American women say men are increasingly egocentric, selfish and lazy. In fact, poll results found women are far less likely than they were 20 years ago to say that most men are basically kind, gentle and thoughtful. At the same time, 90 percent of the women surveyed were married or planned on someday tying the knot.

These are just a few of the mounting frustrations women expressed in the 1990 Virginia Slims Women's Opinion Poll, the most comprehensive women's opinion poll in the nation. Sixth in a series of national surveys begun in 1970, the poll surveys a cross section of 3,000 women and 1,000 men to measure women's

attitudes, beliefs and behavior at intervals that correspond to changing events in society.

1990 marks the 20th anniversary of the poll and reveals that women today are looking for changes and making demands. Women may have made major breakthroughs in the workplace over the last 20 years, but now they are faced with increased stress while trying to juggle the responsibilities of being a co-worker, mother, spouse and homemaker all at once.

This is one of the reasons women have become increasingly critical of men. With their newfound independence, they expect more from their relationships. As they contribute more to the family income, they expect a more equitable division of household responsibilities and child care.

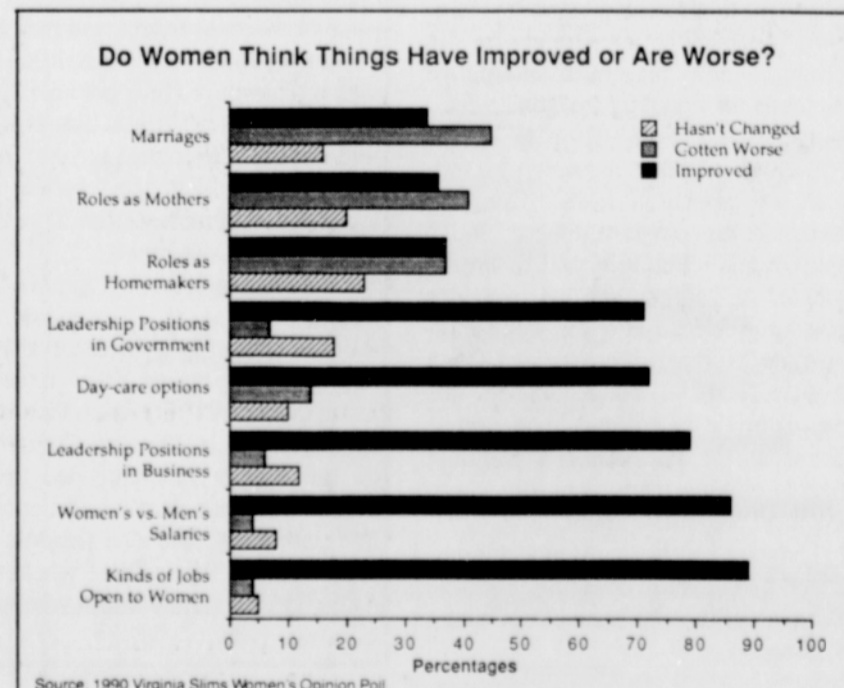
And yet, while women have made great advances in the workplace, their greatest source of satisfaction still comes from home life. Marriage

and family remain the center of most American women's lives. And for the first time since 1974, women's preference for a lifestyle that combines marriage, family and career has declined. The proportion of women who would choose a dual-earner, shared-responsibility marriage also has dropped from 57 percent in 1985 to 53 percent in 1990 — a slow swing back toward the 46 percent of 1974.

"Women are reevaluating where they are today," said Burns W. Roper, chairman of The Roper Organization Inc., who conducted the poll. "While they don't want to go back to a traditional wife and mother lifestyle, the poll suggests they feel that new solutions for balancing family and career need to be found."

Women would like more help from their spouses and feel they should put less pressure on themselves to be superwomen. They also would like to see higher pay. The chief source of stress in their lives is money, the principal factor they feel would make it better. Sixty-three percent say that to live on is the leading cause of resentment in their lives. Salary inequities between men and women are at the root of the problem — 50 percent of women believe that over the next 10 years major changes are needed to make women's salaries comparable to those of men.

Most of all, the 1990 Virginia Slims Women's Opinion Poll confirms that the role of women in society is still changing. Three-quarters of women believe that their roles should and will continue to change in the 1990s. However, as always with change, some things remain the same. And with women, it appears the eternal lament over men will do just that. ■



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