

Perspectives

by Professor McKinley Burt

More Adventures In Learning: Making Curriculum Relevant

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Last week I promised to describe an innovative multi-disciplinary course I introduced at Portland State University in the early seventies, "Black Economic Experience." Completely unexpected was the fact that this originally one-semester offering became a full school year course accepted for three credit hours in such diverse areas as history, minority studies, urban studies, business and sociology. Even more extraordinary was the fact that my home department was the much-maligned "Black Studies Department."

Let us first examine the social scenario that presaged this unusual event. The country was riding the crest of a wave of urban cultural readjustments labeled as the new "Great Society." In the community, in the agency, on the street and in the university some concessions were being made to a surging sense of identity on the part of African Americans. The field of education was also affected and there, with tongue-in-cheek, a rigid and racist academia conceded in places that there might be some validity (not much) in the proposition that African Americans had a role in history other than the traditional categories of slavery and degradation.

The very first course I taught at P.S.U. (1971) was based upon a book I had written about the historic, and later, contributions of Blacks to the science and technology of this country--and the world, "Black Inventors of America." What happened is that it soon became obvious that for an understanding of such an extraordinary event as the sudden appearance on the world's stage of so many African American geniuses, it would be necessary to examine their background in two time directions--their past and the future ramifications of the process.

For example, the question most frequently asked by many Blacks, and almost all whites--whether in my classroom, on national lecture tours, or by queries from readers across the country--was how could these "backward" ex-slaves and "half-literate" early twentieth century African Americans have made such brilliant contributions to the science and technology of the world? Their inventions and discoveries ranged from industrial machinery to railroad engineering, from electrical lighting systems to thermodynamic refining processes, from telephone and telegraph to safety appliances. It was the startling answer to this question that was predication for the first major expansion of the course.

Well documented research determined that the slave-bound past of these inventors was not simply the antebellum shuffle of cotton pickers and mixers of mint juleps from establishment folklore, but that, instead, plantation



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Blacks ran the cotton gins and much other machinery, were the blacksmiths and the millwrights, ran the saw mills, and built the fabulous southern mansions, and were the bricklayers and the forgers of the intricate ironwork of New Orleans. The course developed into a fascinating account of "real" history as it was revealed that during the civil war Blacks ran the railroads and manufactured munitions and uniforms for a Confederate war machine desperate for manpower. Indeed, these Blacks possessed all the prerequisites for understanding technology and carrying it to new heights--which they did!

With these startling revelations of previously concealed historical facts, word spread throughout the school's student body and faculty--many more white students registered for the expanded class to the chagrin of white instructors who were losing F.T.E. ("Full Time Enrollment" dollars) to my operation. Even more came when I was able to obtain reams of documentation from England (the former "British Colonial Office") describing the hundreds of American "Iron Plantations" stretching from Saugus, Massachusetts to the Chesapeake Bay area. These highly technical operations of refining and forging iron ingots were manned almost solely by "complements of African men women and children!" Their names and daily outputs were given.

The final structure of the course evolved from research in the forward time direction--what were the consequences of all this innovative fervor, the basis of a good part of the American industrial revolution? Why did not the African American population as a whole benefit from this economic largesse that built fabulous fortunes, created new industries and moved population centers about? Why is it yet today that very few Americans (including Blacks) are aware of how much this country's infrastructure was modernized and changed forever by Black inventions? These questions were advanced and answered in the third semester of the class as the barriers and constraints of racism were explored--from educational disabilities to employment discrimination, and from redlining in the banking and real estate communities to programs designed to mitigate the disasters.

These issues, examined here, are very relevant to my series currently appearing on the front page of this newspaper: "Blacks and Science."

Mandela to receive

"Proud Lady" Award

by Ulysses Tucker, Jr.

Nelson Mandela, a world-renowned leader in the movement against the apartheid policies of the white-ruled South African government, has been chosen to receive the "Proud Lady" award from the American Health and Beauty Aids Institute (AHBAI).

"Nelson Mandela truly exemplifies the traits of the 'Proud Lady', a symbol of pride, creativity and strength through unity," said Geri Duncan Jones, executive director of AHBAI.

Mandela, a leader of the then-outlawed African National Congress (ANC), was imprisoned in 1962 and later received a life sentence for plotting the violent overthrow of the minority white government. Now 71 years old, Mandela was released from prison in February, ending his 27-year confinement. During his years in prison, Mandela became a global symbol of the fight against apartheid.

Today, Mandela continues his anti-apartheid activities as the lead negotiator in talks between the South African government and the ANC. It is his unwavering commitment to end apartheid (at great personal expense) that has earned Mandela the Proud Lady award.

The prestigious award will be presented at the AHBAI Eighth Annual Mid-Year Conference, "Urban Marketing: Generating Profits in the '90s," to be held June 17-20 at La Costa Hotel and Spa in Carlsbad, Calif.

The American Health and Beauty Aids Institute is a national trade organization representing the leading manufacturers of ethnic hair care and cosmetic products. Since 1981, the association has established vital programs to increase awareness of the profitability of the \$2.8 billion ethnic HBA category.

For more Mid-Year Conference information, contact AHBAI Headquarters, 111 East Wacker Drive, Suite 600, Chicago, IL; 312/644-6610.

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Stop Flexing Your Sexual Ego

Can a man and a woman sleep together without making love? Actually, I have encountered many who contend that it is virtually impossible to suppress one's desire to be strong during the heat of passion. Are you strong? Can you resist temptation? It is simply a matter of principles and morality.

Let's say, you meet a woman (not many men make this request) who tells you that she will not participate in sexual intercourse until she is married. Yet, she wants to spend intimate nights together. Do you force the issue? Is she teasing you? Do you respect her wish? It takes a different type of man to accept going without intercourse because as mentioned before, most equate their manhood with their sexuality. "If you don't do it, somebody will..." is the typical mentality. The attitude is an unfortunate one, but that's just the way most men think--with the wrong head. Not always a saint myself, I have also been guilty in the past of this mentality or attitude.

Sex is the easiest thing in the world to access these days, regardless of the AIDS epidemic or threat of other STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases). Enter any bar or nightclub for example with securing a sexual partner as your objective and chances are you will succeed. If you approach 25 women (or men) wearing "your mission" on your sleeves, you will eventually encounter someone with like values. There is someone for everyone. Needless to say, there are also a wide variety of morals and values in the world. If the mission is sex, you'll find it; if the

mission is a one night stand, you'll find it; if the mission is a lesbian/homosexual relationship, you'll find it; if the mission is to find a mate for life, you'll find it. My grandmother used to tell me that there is nothing in the world that people would not do. You can think of the wildest thing in the world and people will do it, be it for ego purposes, money, or esteem building.

It gets to the point where the sexual act is what it is, a sexual act. At some point, it has to get old and meaningless. Wouldn't it be fun to make love to someone you really love or possibly wait until marriage to make love if that's what your partner wanted? Wouldn't it be fun to share showers, secrets, dreams, touch, feelings, and develop listening skills without the sexual act? Some can and other won't...ego is the problem. Ego can get you in trouble also.

Let's say, in the heat of passion, you end up with someone you really do not care for a great deal. Good sex, a telephone call away and she is crazy about you. Ego. All of a sudden, she comes up pregnant and you start to turn flips. "Who's is it you ask? It's not mine...!" is a typical attitude. Some men have this grandiose idea of who they would like to be the mother of their future children, but the contradiction occurs when they sleep with people that they do not care about the person. Now, you have to psychologically prepare for motherhood/fatherhood, acknowledging or not acknowledging the situation, or an abortion for that matter. Flexing the ego for an orgasm can get people in real trouble and caused great tension. There's nothing worse than two human

beings with a kid in common who hate each other. A child deserves a happy and healthy living environment. Strangely, the topic of birth control always come up after the fact. Some people need to re-evaluate their lifestyle, attitudes towards intimacy, sex, and values.

So, the question remains, can a man and a woman (married folks do it all the time) sleep together without making love? You can look as far as your individual values to answer that question. I think that it does the soul good to go extended periods of time without sexual intercourse or making love. It gives a person a fresher perspective and helps a person to rearrange some potentially bad attitudes towards sex. Making love to someone's mind can be wonderful. Have you ever had an intellectual orgasm? Unlike the quick fix sexual orgasmism, this one takes time, patience, sensitivity, respect, and extremely good listening skills. Let's face some reality here, when we meet people our first attractions are sexual. You can not tell from across the room that he/she has a wonderful mind or great values. Through interaction, you will learn eventually that a person may be easy to sleep with or whether it will take more time than you are willing to commit. Growth takes commitment.

Now, I do not want to seem like I'm picking on men because there are some women just as bad. It's just that men are more guilty than women. Again, I ask the question, wouldn't it be great to make love to someone you love? You can, that's if you stop flexing your ego and wait for what is right. You can always find someone willing to commit the act...

Women's Crisis Line Issues Rape Alert

Calls related to incidents of rape increase dramatically at the Portland Women's Crisis Line during the Rose Festival. Because so many people are congregated in the downtown area during this time, women and children become easy and accessible targets for rapists. These rapes generally fall into two categories: either stranger rape which occurs when a woman is assaulted by someone as she walks down a street or goes to her car, etc.; and an acquaintance rape which often occurs with someone the woman has just met at the Festival or Fun Center.

All women should be aware of the risk involved and should take necessary precautions. It is important to stay in groups and not walk to places alone. Additionally, it is important to be aware that dates and acquaintances account for at least 80% of the rapes in this community. Trust your instincts about people and act assertively when you

sense that you aren't safe. Make sure someone knows where you've gone, with whom and when you expect to return; make sure you have enough money with you to take care of yourself (i.e. if you have to take a cab or a bus to get away or make a phone call to get help).

If you are assaulted or harassed or someone you know is, and if you want to report it, notify the police. If you want to talk and get resources and know all your options, you call the Portland Women's Crisis Line 24 hours a day at 235-5333.

PORTLAND CITIZENS' JOB FAIR

Friday, June 15

2:30-6 p.m.

King Neighborhood Facility
(King Elementary School)
4815 NE 7th Ave.

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- Come talk to employers about jobs and careers

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PORTLAND OBSERVER

(USPS 959-680)

OREGON'S OLDEST AFRICAN-AMERICAN PUBLICATION
Established in 1970

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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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