

# Civil Rights Journal

By Benjamin Chavis, Jr.

## The Federalization Of Racism

January 15, 1991 became an historic day in U.S. judicial history because on that day the Supreme Court of the United States took another step backwards away from racial justice. Ironically, January 15th is the birthday of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the renowned slain civil rights leader who championed the cause of racial equality.

In the case known as the Dowell vs. the Board of Education of Oklahoma City, the Supreme Court ruled favorably to constitutionally allow a return to racially segregated "neighborhood schools." This latest decision by the Supreme Court follows a pattern of retreat from a strong commitment to affirmative action and other legal remedies to compensate for past and present racial discrimination.

Earlier we filed our protest to the U.S. Department of Education attempts to limit the provision of minority-based scholarships at colleges and universities. All of this comes on the heels of President Bush's veto of the Civil Rights Act of 1990. Now we have learned of Bush's inclination to also veto the proposed Civil Rights Act of 1991.

During the last thirty years the role of the federal government has changed dramatically from being an advocate of measures to eliminate racism to being an advocate of measures to maintain and further institutionalize racism. We refer to this phenomenon as the "federalization of racism" in the United States. The executive, legislative and judicial branches of the federal government are all guilty of promulgating racism. Of course, this goes against the grain of the future demographic character of the nation, which is to be more multiracial and multicultural.

Justice Thurgood Marshall, in a dissenting opinion to the Oklahoma City school desegregation case, explained the complexity of the racist nature of the issues involved in this case. Marshall posited "In 1972-18 years after this Court first found segregated schools unconstitutional-a federal court finally interrupted this cycle, enjoining the Oklahoma City School Board to implement a specific plan for achieving actual desegregation of its schools...The practical question now before us is whether, 13 years after that injunction was imposed, the same School Board should

have been allowed to return many of its elementary schools to their former one-race status. The majority today suggest that 13 years of desegregation was enough. The Court remands this case for further evaluation of whether the purposes of the injunctive decree were achieved sufficient to justify the decree's dissolution. However, the inquiry it commands to the District Court fails to recognize explicitly the threatened reemergence of on-race schools as a relevant "vestige" of de jure segregation."

In other words, the stage has now been set by the Supreme Court of the United States for lower courts to have a free hand in authorizing the re-segregation of the public schools in this nation. Racial segregation in public schools serves directly to consign millions of African American and other racial and ethnic children to receive substandard education.

All forms of "federalized racism" must be challenged. We join with Justice Marshall in dissent and protest to the decision of the Dowell vs. the Oklahoma City School Board case. Equal quality education for all.

## Letter To The Editor

Dear Editor:

The decision of the Black United Front to Boycott Portland Public Schools is not a new idea, but a delayed action that was postponed over eighteen years ago. The negotiation between the Black Community and the Portland School Board was never completed. The School Board defaults on many of its promises.

What we are seeing in form of gangs and drugs dealers and sellers and other criminal activities occurring in North and Northeast Portland is the aftermath of failure to educate the Portland black Student in the 60's, 70's, and 80's. In these years we had some poorly equipped teachers who were sent to the area to teach. They were given what I started to call "combat pay", which was a thousand dollars or more a month to teach over here. At that time, most of the teachers' motive was financial. Children were sent to time-out day after day to spend most of the day. Suspension was the order of the day.

These are the men and women who are having children and it's their children we are dealing with; most didn't have pleasant experiences or success in school. That's why there is very little motivation or even cooperation. Their feelings are negative because they have

failed, some have been in prison, and they have found life to be hard out there.

It's not only the failure of the School to accept and deal with their responsibility,

**Blacks have been denied on a wide scale to participate in wealth of growth that this country have enjoyed. We were brought over as slaves, denied education, social rights and freedom, but yet we have survived under un-human circumstances. We have shown our loyalty to our Country, because even with all the difficulties and problems we still love this country. When we criticize the system, we do it because we are a part of this country and want to be treated as equals in every way.**

but our City of Portland and the State of Oregon as well as our Country, America who has dealt very hideous with problems facing Black Americans educationally, economically, socially, has not been justifiable.

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We are concerned about the education of Black Children. We have lost a great deal of the generation of the 60's, 70's, and 80's to drugs, and everything; we want things better for the children who are coming along. This is what we are saying to the School Board, the City of Portland, and America.

Give us our dream, give us Dr. King's Dream, because as long as we labor under the social ills and circumstances that we are presently under, we are losing our strength as a strong country. We are as strong as our weakest link--"Remember this."

Sincerely,  
**Vesia Loving-DeWeese**  
Portland, Oregon  
P.S. To those who are trying to blame Portland's schools' problems and failures on Dr. Matthew Prohett, remember these were and still are the problems and failures of the Blanchard years that Mr. McCloy have continued to implement with the full support and knowledge of the school board, Under the leadership of Dr. Prohett. Dr. Prohett has only been in Portland eight years. These problems were here when I went to high school and that wasn't yesterday.

### Stephen Cosgrove Reading For Kids Saturday Storytelling

Powell's Books for Kids in Beaverton presents children's author/illustrator Stephen Cosgrove at our Saturday Storytelling on February 9th at 11 a.m. Mr. Cosgrove will read at 11 a.m. and will autograph books afterward.

Stephen Cosgrove's books include the Serendipity series as well as other well known books including Prancer, the Dream Stealer, Heidi's Rose and The Song of the Sea trilogy. Powell's Books for Kids Saturday Storytelling begins at 11 a.m. weekly and is free. For more information or to reserve books, please call 643-3131 or 671-0671.

### National Response Center Hotline

Operated by the U.S. Coast Guard, this hotline is used to report spills of oil and other hazardous materials. The hotline is available 24 hours a day, every day of the year.  
1-800-424-8802.

### Safe Drinking Water Hotline

Provides information and publications to the public and the regulated community in understanding EPA's drinking water regulations and programs. Operates Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Eastern time. 1-800-426-4791.

## The Bitter Fruits Of War

Every empire has required an external enemy, in order to justify its measures to suppress domestic unrest, and to silence its internal critics. Every empire must have a focal point to channel its aggressive objectives. Ancient Rome had Carthage; Napoleon had the British. The fundamental basis of American power in the twentieth century has been the quest for empire. In Southeast Asia, the declared goal of "containing Communism" was responsible for the deaths of 50,000 American troops and millions of additional casualties among the Vietnamese people. The propaganda of American power has always created external enemies, larger-than-life figures which are used to justify massive military expenditures.

Saddam Hussein is only the latest in a series of "political demons" created by the U.S. media, government officials and the corporate elite. In an infantile language more appropriate to Saturday afternoon wrestling matches on television, the public vilification of Saddam is personalized by Bush and his flunkies. To preserve corporate domination of world oil markets, and to assert American military hegemony in the Mideast, filling the vacuum left by the Soviets, the masses of U.S. citizens are being manipulated into endorsing a war in which thousands of innocent people will become victims.

In the euphoria generated by Americas' blitzkrieg against Iraq in the opening days of the war, the stock market soared and oil prices fell to August, 1990 lows. The American people were told that the fruits of war would be the easy destruction of an evil dictator, the crushing of international terrorism, and the reestablishment of the U.S. as a Superpower.

Few measured the real human costs of war, upon both its victors and victims. The fruits of war are young children who must be told that their father, a young flight lieutenant, was shot down in his F-16 fighter over Bagdad, never to return home. The fruits of war are the mothers and fathers of wounded and captured soldiers, who must worry as parents only about their children, and yet are powerless to do anything about it. The fruits of war are young women and men who will lose their limbs, or are paralyzed or blinded by mortar fire, and must be retrained to enter the workforce. The fruits of war are the thousands of American families whose

economic lives are disrupted, pushed to the edge of bankruptcy, falling behind in mortgage payments, because one parent in the army reserve has been shipped out to Saudi Arabia.

Television reporters tell us about "surgical air strikes" by Americans bombers, a concept both absurd and dishonest. Pilots speeding at one thousand miles per hour, dropping one ton bombs guided by lasers, are not conducting kidney transplants or brain microsurgery. They are obliterating families, homes, mosques, and centers of daily life. The sixteen year old boys in the Iraqi army are not the security thugs who raped and murdered Kuwaiti people. They are also the innocent victims, sacrificing their lives beneath American bombardments.

This unnecessary, avoidable and indefensible war is not against Saddam Hussein. It is, in effect, a massive attack against the Iraqi people specifically, and generally against the entire Arab world. The fruits of war are guilt, shame, and the immoral responsibility for acts of military terrorism which equal or exceed those committed in Kuwait by Saddam Hussein.

The only positive fruits produced by war are the protests of those who oppose death and destruction. People of conscience are taking a stand. In Hiroshima, survivors of the 1945 atomic bombing staged a sit-in. In Germany, one hundred thousand marched the day after the war began. In San Francisco, nearly one thousand antiwar demonstrators were arrested, the most ever in a single day in that city's turbulent history. In New York City, five thousand protested, tying up traffic for hours. Major demonstrations were organized in Washington, D.C. The bitter fruits of war will only be ended when the American people regain control of their own government, demanding an end to the politics of empire and violence, which threatens the peace of the world.

Nearly forty years ago, in late 1952, the Supreme Court heard the historic case, Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, which would outlaw racial segregation in public schools. Brown was the culmination of twenty years' legal strategy by the NAACP's legal staff, directed by Charles Hamilton Houston and Thurgood Marshall. The High Court's decision declared unanimously that "in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities

are inherently unequal." The Brown decision led directly to the important Montgomery Bus Boycott movement which catapulted Martin Luther King, Jr., into political prominence, and eventually shattered the system of Jim Crow.

More than a generation has passed since the great victories of the civil rights movement. Our cities have become more racially segregated than ever before; public schools in urban areas have become more racially segregated than ever before; public schools in urban areas have deteriorated with declining tax bases and the flight of the middle classes to the suburbs. The signs reading "white" and "colored" are no longer present in the doorways of our schools, but the segregation of income, poverty and the ghetto has in effect reversed the Brown Decision. Millions of Black, Latino and low income children are being deprived quality education, because school systems are unable to provide the academic tools necessary for learning.

Last month, the Supreme Court took another decisive step away from the legacy of Brown. In a 5-3 ruling in an Oklahoma City case, the court made it easier for cities to halt school busing for desegregation, even when their schools remain rigidly polarized by race. The court's majority declared that a locality could terminate a desegregation order in its school system if it eliminated the "vestiges of past discrimination...to the extent practicable" in hiring policies, students' school assignments, transportation, and facilities. A school system had to show that it made efforts to comply with desegregation orders within a vaguely termed "reasonable period of time." Chief Justice William Rehnquist, speaking for the majority, stated that "Federal supervision of local school systems was intended as a temporary measure to remedy past discrimination." Rehnquist's ruling utterly failed to take into account that institutional racism did not disappear with the end of Jim Crow segregation. In dissent, Associate Justice Thurgood Marshall wrote: "The majority suggests that 13 years of desegregation (in Oklahoma city schools) was enough. I strongly disagree."

More than four hundred school districts across the country are under a court-ordered desegregation plan, including Cleveland, Dallas, Chicago, Buffalo and Phoenix. Many of these

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## Reinvestments in the Community

### Nero and Associates Discusses Changes in Black Community

Nero and Associates, Inc. (NAI) congratulates the Portland Observer on twenty years of publication, serving both the Portland Black community and the entire City of Roses.

"What's in it for us?" How does the Portland Observer help the

drugs, prostitution, and broken families, without the political expediency of others diminishing our voices.

We can no longer afford to ask, "What's in it for me?" We must ask, "What's in it for us?" How do minorities benefit?" If we do not do this, we stand the risk of being

cational system to provide equal opportunity, financially as well as academically. We must change our aid and social welfare programs to encourage families to come together and stay together. We must improve our legal system to promote the concepts of fairness and consistency

**"What's in it for us? Hopefully, a society in which we can all live, without daily fear of crime, violence, drugs, family disintegration, and hatred. One which responds to our humanity, rather than our inhumanity. One which helps rather than hinders, tears down walls instead of building them, shows caring rather than apathy."**

Black community? How does it help the city?

Black-oriented newspapers give their readership the opportunity to see daily events from the point of view of other Blacks, in contrast to the more sterilized views of our local television stations and regional newspaper.

Minority-oriented newspapers provide a forum for the minority community to express its views without hesitation. We can view and discuss the progress and vitality of our community, as well as address the solutions to problems of crime,

seen as self-centered, self-righteous, and unresponsive to others--precisely the qualities seen by many in today's mainstream society and government.

NAI encourages the Portland Observer and all Portlanders, whatever race or ethnic group, to join in an effort to improve ourselves and our relations with others. Without the ability and willingness to cooperate, no actions we take as individuals or small groups can have a lasting impact to cause positive change.

We must improve our edu-

in enforcement, and compassion in providing alternatives to those and only those who can and are willing to be helped through education, training the counseling.

"What's in it for us?" Hopefully, a society in which we can all live, without daily fear of crime, violence, drugs, family disintegration, and hatred. One which responds to our humanity, rather than our inhumanity. One which helps rather than hinders, tears down walls instead of building them, shows caring rather than apathy.

That's a lot of "in it" for all of us.



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