

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

"African American Males Are Not The Problem"

BY BENJAMIN F. CHAVIS, JR.

During the last several years there has been a growing emphasis on the plight and conditions of African American males in the United States. To be sure there are serious and life threatening circumstances confronting African American males and the situation appears to be getting worse. The incarceration and homicide rates of African American males continue to escalate. In some urban areas the drop-out rate of African American males from high school is now over fifty percent. Yes, these realities and others being revealed point to a critical situation.

In response there have been national conferences, seminars, workshops and prayer services; all which we support. Virginia Governor, Douglas Wilder, and other African American leaders are now participating in a federal commission concerning the plight of African American males. We support all efforts to respond to the deteriorating social condition of African American males. USA TODAY issued a special new

report entitled "Young Black Males Increasingly Are At Risk." The report concluded that "With economic opportunities dwindling, family life disintegrating and slayings reaching an all high, the American dream of opportunity has become a nightmare for many young black men."

There is a growing debate about the development of special schools for young African American males. But, while this debate occurs, the reality is that more than 25% of all African American males continue to be incarcerated between the ages of 18 and 29.

We support the efforts of the Rev. Wintley Phipps of Washington, D.C. to convince political and corporate leaders to take concrete steps to provide resources and programs designed to provide African American males "vision, values, and vehicles of opportunity."

Dr. Ida Mukenge, the executive director of the Morehouse Research Institute in Atlanta, Georgia asserted, "This problem will not be solved in a single generation...It is a national crisis not just limited to African American

males. They are not men in isolation; they are men in society." We believe that Dr. Mukenge has put her finger on the essential point and place where more attention needs to be focused. In other words, any attempt to resolve or solve the problems associated with the plight of African American males does not deal with the systemic social and racial inequities of the society at large is an attempt in futility.

We caution against the oversimplification of the difficulties that besiege African American males and females in this society.

African American males are not the problem. The problem is a racist and exploitative society that seeks to blame the victims for their victimization.

Yes, we must provide "social services" and programs for African Americans and all others who are in need of help, but a failure to recognize the necessity for demanding "social change and transformation" of fundamental structure of this society perpetuates the real problem.

Letter To The Editor; The real crime against the people?

All of us here in N.E. Portland are gravely concerned about the brutality and senselessness of gang violence and the ever growing drug problem. Of course even more aware, are those of us with children. I myself have three teenagers of my own.

More and more of us medical professionals have bought property here, either in the past or recently to be close to our work places; such as Emanuel Hospital, The American Red Cross and Kaiser Permanente, and others. We are here to enjoy the big older homes, be close to our jobs, and make a comfortable, place for our families to live and grow.

Moving here, with more of us to come, has brought property values up, pushed neighbors to clean up their blocks, and begin again to have pride in their homes, as well as begin to spirit standing up for themselves against gangs and drugs in the neighborhood.

The crime I want to address is on a bigger scale! Working long hours, and even on regular days off, all of us want to feel able to shop in our close neighborhood markets. The threat of violence is not the issue today, the crime I'm more concerned with is that against

the many helpless people who are locked in this area. Whether because of lack of transportation, low income, minority discrimination, as well as lack of knowledge, they are forced to shop at Safeway on Martin Luther King Blvd., and Fred Meyers on Interstate, to point to the most guilty.

Like clock work, during the weeks of the 1st and 15th of each month, these neighborhood markets prey on the low income, food stamp recipients, as well as those on other fixed incomes. Prices are raised on most common sold items, double, even triple the prices sold during the off weeks. All consumers are valuable, but the ones who are already under hardship, are forced to pay even more. This kind of discrimination has got to stop if we expect a change to begin at all, they've suffered enough. The rich continue to get fatter, and the poor remain down. Is that America's motto? Keep them in one area. Many people have begun to believe so.

All of us who live here and are able, refuse to spend our hard earned money in our own neighborhood, until this injustice has been resolved. We all go on to outer lying supermarkets where prices are much lower.

If Safeway market on M.L.K. Blvd. is in danger of closing due to violent crime, the real crime should be UNFAIR HIGH PRICES, pushed on the victims, the neighborhood consumers.

The step to take is making people aware that they don't have to tolerate paying high price, anymore than to tolerate gangs and drugs in their streets.

Discrimination of all forms has gone on in Portland long enough. If it takes a few citizens to help a group, maybe to help themselves, then so be it.

Let's all try a little harder. We aren't leaving: Gangs will be pushed out, drug houses will be shut down, trash, and yards cleaned up, high prices and harassment of honest citizens will not be tolerated.

We are here to stay!
Signed concerned citizen,
Kristine J. Smith

Additional note:
Believe me the recent news media coverage at the Safeway market on M.L.K. Blvd. in no way represented the average neighborhood shopper. Maybe they should have shown the truth, as hard as it may be for them to admit. The visit from our local politicians will not guarantee our future votes.

SBA Gives Annual Award

Chris Fish, owner of Northwest Industrial Coatings in White City, has been selected as Oregon's Small Business Person of the Year by the U.S. Small Business Administration. This honor also places him in consideration for the National Small Business Person of the Year award. He will join 49 other state honorees in Washington D.C. in May to participate in a week of Small Business Administration events.

His company specializes in epoxy powder coatings, a dry process that bonds material to metals and provides a more durable coating than paint. Application for the product range from insulating computer parts to coating miles of fencing along state highways.

After the 1989 San Francisco earthquake, all bridges and buildings needed to be rebuilt with spiral rebar steel. Because no shops were set up to

coat spiral rebar, fish seized the opportunity and redesigned his coating process to handle the job. As a result, Northwest Industrial Coatings was able to powder coat all the rebar for the Bay Area.

Family Medical Leave Bill Wins Senate Approval

SB 39, the Family Medical Leave Bill, won Senate approval in a 21 - 9 floor vote. The Family Medical Leave Bill, sponsored by the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries, the Oregon School Employees Association and the Oregon Public Employees Union, would allow workers to take up to 12 weeks unpaid leave during a two year time frame to care for a critically ill or injured parent, parent-in-law, child or spouse. With this legislation, a worker could take time off to attend to a family emergency without fear of losing a job. The law would cover Oregon companies employing 25 or more full or part-time employees.

"I'm delighted the bill passed the Senate," commented Labor and Industries' Commissioner Mary Wendy Roberts. "This pro-family legislation acknowledges the changing demographics of the work force, it acknowledges the importance of the family, and it acknowledges the conflicts workers face trying to reconcile the demands of the work placed with the demands of the family. Citizen groups, employee groups and a major Oregon employer testified in support of this bill. This is the time to put our legislation where our hearts are - with families in today's world."

SB 39 will receive a House hearing, which has not yet been scheduled. "It is my hope that this issue will be allowed to go to a floor debated and a floor vote in the House," added Roberts. "I believe that were it put to the vote of the people today, it would win handily. I hope the House vote will reflect the public support the bill has already received."



PERSPECTIVES

by Professor McKinley Burt

More On Those Dropouts: Diamonds In The Rough?

This week we honor another of those compassion inspired African American innovators whose contributions so significantly furthered the welfare, comfort and safety of all mankind. Today, we cite Vivien T. Thomas, pioneer in the development of cardiovascular surgery and educator of young surgeons (1910-)

Thomas, one of four children, was raised in Nashville, Tennessee. This capital city had an excellent, though, segregated school system. There were also several very famous 'black colleges, including Fisk University and Meharry Medical College. However, our medical pioneer was destined for the 'dropout track, never to earn a single college credit over an illustrious career. A little more fortunate than our last week's inventor, Garrett A. Morgan, Mr. Thomas finally was able to finish Pearl High School in 1929 (Earlier, I have cited the 10th and 12th grades as the FAVORITE DROPOUT STATIONS in the new 'tracking programs designed for our urban 'predominantly black' school districts).

It is only fortuitous circumstance that America and the world did not lose this DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH very early on. That metaphor occurs to me

for coincident with this writing, the media is giving glowing accounts of a 230 carat perfect South African diamond which is rivaled only by the treasures of the British royal family. I am sure that the irony is not lost upon you as we consider the parallel of a cruel looting of African land and genius through ill-disguised slavery. We cannot afford to lose any of our "diamonds" to any economic or educational scheme.

The 'medical career' of Vivien Thomas began in February of 1930 when, unable to afford college, he was taken by a friend to the Vanderbilt Medical school for a possible job (\$12.00 a week). The famous cardiac surgeon Alfred Blalock, interviewed him for a position as laboratory assistant and hired him on the spot. Thus began a fifty year career that leaves one incredulous, except that it, is so well documented. Thomas rapidly advanced to become Blalock's chief technician and laboratory chief. He quickly learned to do chemical determinations and to carry out physiological studies. Eventually, he learned to operate, performing complicated experimental cardiac operations totally unassisted and devising new procedures (Pioneered the 'Blue Baby' operation).

Thomas later moved to the Johns Hopkins Medical School where he earned international acclaim in the same capacities. He helped to train the greats of the American surgical community; Henry Bahnon, Denton Cooley, Rolio Hanlon, Mark Ravich, David Sabiston, et al. I particularly like the following segment

of a speech given by Dr. C. Rollins Hanlon, Director, American College of Surgeons. The date was February, 1971, and the occasion was the presentation of his (Thomas) portrait to the great genius (Dr. Hanlon was this trainee many years earlier).

"...A university or any great enterprise is a collection of men and women. It is their collective deeds that bring greatness and fame to an institution, a department or a nation. Behind one man who walks on the moon are thousands of technicians (dedicated) whose hearts and souls ride in the rocket..."

"It is my hope...that this portrait will inspire many other technicians with a sense of the opportunity for true greatness in working within these walls. As an erstwhile member of this faculty and on behalf of the past and present members of this great Department of Surgery, I am honored to present to the Johns Hopkins University and Hospital, this portrait of OUR COLLEAGUE, Vivien Thomas."

Surely we all realize that we cannot rely upon similar fortuitous circumstance to rescue our youth from the 'inspired' tracking of urban youth that is planned. There has to be both an intervention in new experiments in "The Miseducation of The Negro", and innovative new approaches to 'Continuing Education' for those who drop out in any case (There is a very expensive book about Thomas which is said to be on sale at only \$9.95. I'll have that for you next week).

Should Minority Children Be Placed With White Families?

Should minority children be placed with a white family? This is the question that was addressed at a community forum on May 3. Children's Services Division is developing a policy on transracial placements and is seeking public input.

If you have strong feelings on this issue, you are not alone. On one side of the issue are people who think that no child should be adopted out of their racial or cultural group; that non-minority parents cannot help the

child understand his or her culture. On the other side are people who say there is no evidence to suggest children are harmed or at a disadvantage if placed outside their ethnic group, and that placement with a loving family is better than making a child wait for a same-race family.

Differing views were presented by a panel of speakers including Joan Shireman and Terry Cross, Portland State University School of Social Work; Dr. Virginia Phillips, One Church, One

Child; Louise Calder, foster parent; and Julie McFarlane, Juvenile Rights Project.

The public was invited to share their ideas and concerns. CSD staff was available to answer questions.

The forum was Friday, May 3, 1991 from 1:15 to 5:00 p.m. at the second floor auditorium of The Portland Building, 1120 SW Fifth, Portland.

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Reinvestments in the Community

Choosing the "Right" Breakfast for Children

by Angeliqe Sanders

In these days of the "do-it-all" woman, it is difficult to find enough time, money, and patience to feed one's children properly.

Add to this the additional worries of nutrition and flavor--as well as misleading, often confusing advertising--and it becomes nearly impossible. Black working women (and men!) today try hard to provide a nutritionally complete breakfast for the little ones--often at the expense of their own health--but sometimes the ease of jelly rolls conquers the "Superwoman Syndrome". In an effort to provide you with any help I can, here's what I learned from comparing nutrition labels and talking to doctors and nurses (since I don't have any children, and have time to mill around in stores and call hospitals!).

Firstly, something that really surprised me was that most of the doctors and nurses I talked to follow the age-old tradition of feeding their children eggs for breakfast. I've been reading lately that cholesterol is not as bad as everyone seems once to have thought. This might account for eggs' slowly rising popularity in the last year or so. They do make a good meat substitute, with similar protein content yet less fat; but, somehow, any advertisement for food that simply says it's "incredible,

edible" is just not encouraging.

All the doctors/nurses also told me they include a bread/grain food group item; namely, one of the following:

A) Toast. It's fast and easy. Go light on the "toppings", and choose a whole grain bread rather than white (white has many vitamins bleached out) if the kids will eat it.

B) Pancakes. These are okay if you follow the above rules: few toppings (try trading blueberries or strawberries for syrup; cream cheese for butter), and whole grain flour/mix over white.

C) Cereal. Cold cereal seems to be preferred over hot; also, children tend to like it better. Cereals that contain fiber or oat-bran is a plus (even though the extent of the positive affects of oat bran has not yet been proven). Steering clear of sugar is ideal, but most youths need a mid-way compromise: instead of their frosted flakes, instead of your shredded wheat, how about Cheerios? One pediatric hospital said that is what they feed their patients, and the kids don't complain.

Of course, all doctors recommended fruit, and some proffered yogurt--high fat, but rich in calcium--as a good breakfast item.

As for bacon or sausage, it is acceptable in minor quantities.

Tobacco Co. Launches New Initiatives to discourage Smoking Among Youth

R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. and its fellow members of the Tobacco Institute today announced new initiatives to discourage young people from smoking. "We don't want young people to smoke, and we don't market our products to young people," said James W. Johnston, chairman and chief executive officer of R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. "The Tobacco Institute's new program will make it more difficult for children to have access to cigarettes, and we support it wholeheartedly," he said.

The new initiatives expand the system of voluntary restraints the tobacco industry has adhered to for nearly 20 years.

"Time and again, studies have shown that young people cite the influence of friends and family as the reason they began smoking," Johnston said. "The Tobacco Institute's new programs will help parents counter those influences, and will make it more difficult for children to buy cigarettes."

"They will also demonstrate what we as an industry have said for years: that we don't market to children, we don't advertise to children and we're willing to put into place voluntary programs that will help keep children from smoking," Johnston said.

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