

Vantage Point

By Ron Daniels

Domestic Marshall Plan Needed To Cope With The State Of Emergency In Urban America

There is a defacto State of Emergency for poor and disadvantaged people locked in inner-city urban America; a State of Emergency which can only be ameliorated by a massive Domestic Marshall Plan; a State of Emergency which can only permanently be ended through what Dr. King called a "radical revolution of values," the empowerment of the disadvantaged and fundamental changes in the political and economic system in the U.S. There are two Americas in the U.S., one which is mostly white, rich, powerful and privileged and the "other America" which is mostly Black and people of color, out of power, and underdeveloped. It is increasingly evident that the rich and the powerful, the privileged few who run this nation have virtually no regard for the poor and the powerless.

Urban inner-city areas are plagued by depression levels of unemployment, underemployment, and grinding poverty. Bryant Gumbel noted on a recent NBC Today Show report that the unemployment rate for adult Black males in one Chicago neighborhood is 50%. In many cities unemployment rates in inner-city neighborhoods of 50-70% is commonplace. The public schools have become the preserve of the inferior education. The housing inventory is dilapidated and strained by overcrowding due to acute housing shortages. Hospitals and community health clinics are closing down in the face of a growing drug crisis and an escalating AIDS epidemic. A firestorm of crime, violence and murder of unprecedented proportions has exploded in the inner-cities of the other America. The inner-cities have become like Third World

countries where the Black poor, Latinos and other people of color are forced to subsist like "the wretched of the earth."

What is the response of the government to this State of Emergency? Private investors are scrambling to rebuild war torn Kuwait with the active encouragement of the U.S. government. And leading Democrats like Les Aspin and Richard Gephardt are promoting the idea of taking money out of the defense budget to send \$3-5 billion in aid to the Soviet Union to assist that country with its current "emergency." The incentive seems to be the smell of profits in what is potentially a vast new market for U.S. corporate interests. Leading Democrats also pressed to put the Republican sponsored Free Trade Agreement with Mexico on a "fast track." This agreement is bound to drive the wages of U.S. workers down even more rapidly and further exacerbate the crisis of drugs, crime and violence in the inner-cities. In the meantime there is no substantial discussion of massive aid to respond to the crises in the other America.

The National Urban League has reiterated its call for a modest \$50 billion a year over the next decade to stop the bleeding and dying, the death and destruction of human minds, spirits and bodies in the inner-cities of this nation. Though a more radical systemic solution is required in my judgement, a Domestic Marshall Plan is a good focal point to initiate a major shift in national priorities. Massive resources are needed for community economic development to generate decent jobs to alleviate poverty. Communities must

be empowered to make the critical decisions about the types of economic options which are compatible with their needs. Resources to insure a 21st century quality education in the public schools must also be a top priority. Community hospitals and health care centers must be re-opened. And there must be a major investment in housing rehabilitation and new housing construction under the direction of community enterprises controlled by community residents.

Regrettably, neither George Bush and the Republicans or the National Democratic Party are likely to adopt and campaign for a Domestic Marshall Plan. The Republicans do not see the poor and disadvantaged as a part of their economic or political constituency. The Democrats are so heavily mortgaged and indebted to big corporate interests for their campaign financing that they are incapable of acting with and on behalf of the poor and disadvantaged. There are two Americas and both political parties cater to the America which is mostly white, rich, powerful and privileged.

The fate and future of the poor and disadvantaged, therefore, is in the hands of the poor and disadvantaged and those who crave for a new America where there is no poor and disadvantaged. If there is to be a Domestic Marshall Plan to rescue the inner-cities from the present terrible State of Emergency, the dispossessed must lead the charge for its enactment. Perhaps the site of throngs of poor and disadvantaged people standing on the tops of tanks in the streets of America will get the attention of this nation and the world!



Perspectives

By Professor McKinley Burt

Inventing The Wheel All Over Again

"If I've told you once I've told you a thousand times!" No, that's not me speaking in arrogant erudition from Mt. Olympus -- or a neighborhood mother addressing her errant child. I put it as something an exasperated Mother Nature might have said to those unheeding dinosaurs happily ignoring the conditions that forecasted their imminent extinction.

While we have been basking in the image-building warmth of these accounts of our seminal contributions to world culture via the WORD, MATHEMATICS and SCIENCE, it may occur to some that African Americans may be equally as guilty of a failure to understand the greatest truism of existence. Its been stated in many ways, from scholarly polemics to the meanest street vernacular. It is not, of course, that other races or cultures, including this nation, are not being brought up short in the same manner.

"What goes around comes around -- there is nothing new under the sun -- the only thing that changes is change -- He who does not read history is doomed to repeat it, or dejuvu!" Now, what is all that about? Certainly, black people are not the only folks caught up in the seemingly endless cycles of a "world wheel" that revolves through sequences of hope, progress and, then, back to frustration and despair; as though nothing is to be gained from experience or education (or Civil Rights or Affirmative Action). No, I'm pursuing a thought here just a little more practical and pragmatic than that, so let me "descend from the mountain" and put it down front.

At the beginning of "my" writing cycle each fall, I review what it is I have said the past year(s), the letters received and the particular problems and solutions revealed or developed

through that interchange. You may have anticipated me here for what I am going to emphasize is that THE WHEEL IS STILL TURNING (right on by us) -- it is as though "we're not reading the script" as they say. As though we realize belatedly, "I've seen this movie before" and reach for the remote -- when the opportunity to effect change has long since passed.

The same assessment obtains on the macro-timescale when I review the essays on the inspired and effective African American education (and educators) practices of last century and compare the descriptions of those excellent models to the current responses and practices of the contemporary processes. It's like, "hey, that sounds great, we're going to try it"; and we do, momentarily! But, what happens is that the well meaning and enthusiastic brethren are quickly diverted or sidetracked (snowed) by the well-heeled and sophisticated forces of the major educational establishment.

MARKETING, MEDIA MANAGEMENT, ASSOCIATIONS, FEDERAL and CORPORATE RELATION SPECIALISTS, and GRANTS CONSULTANTS all combine to drive a machine whose rhetoric and metaphor is capable of seducing and diverting the strongest from pursuing the real and effective models developed from an hard won indigenous experience. You'll be hard put to find any among them who can point to a documented and successful classroom experience. So, on this cycle you will find me presenting some "new" (smiles) approaches that just may get us off this treadmill of cyclical experience. Since "the wheel has been invented," perhaps we need an educational hexagon or octagon. After all, we are the "Black Inventors."

Well, I know its that time of year again. The readers are letting me know by phone and letter that some have misplacated the citations I've been giving for obtaining free catalogs from the publishers of very economical books on subjects of history, education, race, science and general interest. Try the following:

- *Edward R. Hamiton, Bookseller, Falls Village, CT 06031-5000
- *Dover Publications Inc., 31 East 2nd Street, Mineola, NY 11501
- *Barnes & Noble Booksellers, 126 Fifth Ave., NY, NY 10011
- *A Common Reader, 141 Tompkins Ave., Pleasantville, NY 10570
- *The Scholar's Bookshelf, 51 Everett Drive, Princeton Jct., NJ 08550
- *Daedalus Books, P.O. Box 9132, Hyattsville, MD 20781-0932
- *Columbia University Press, 136 South Broadway, Irvington, NY 10533
- *University of Pennsylvania Press, P.O. Box 4836, Hampden Station, Baltimore, MD 21211

Also, take notice that there is a very excellent new multicultural library in the community for students: "Whitney M. Young, Jr. Education and Cultural Center," an after-school homework/tutorial assistance program for students in grade 6 through sophomore in college. There will be an 'Open House', Friday, September 27 from 2:30 to 6:30 p.m., if attending, call Judy Venable at 280-2600, at the Urban League

Round and about town do drop in at any Daltons Book Store, or Powells at 10th and West Burnside, or Looking Glass at 318 S.W. Taylor, or the Federal Bookstore at 1305 S.W. First, or the Multnomah County Branch Library on N. Killingsworth across from Cascade Community College Campus. (Excellent selection of African American History Material).

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

I am writing this letter of concern, and at the same time, I would like to say that I'm very appalled that businessmen working in our Black community seem to assume that any black female walking down Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd is either a prostitute or dope fiend. I've lived in Oregon on and off all my life. I graduated from Centennial High School and from there, went on to college. I'm a volunteer in the community for Project for Community Recovery, located at Fremont/Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. I was walking from there to my home when the incident occurred.

A white male in his late 40's followed me, heckling at me, and turning corners until I was about a block from

the Portland Observer. He accosted me in his car as if I was working the streets. I told him I was not a whore--my exact words. And he in turn, began to tell me how he found me so attractive and was only admiring me. There was an older couple that pulled up next to the incident in process, and heard my comments to the man as I walked in front of them. The lady leaned out the car and said "good for you honey, you told him."

I have learned at the age of 38 years that suppressing negative feelings on matters in our community that are a concern need to be addressed the proper way. The old way would be to bust out windows, cuss, holler, and nothing would be done. I know today I'm not the only woman this has hap-

pened to. I'm a witness as well as a victim today to this type of thing happening in my community.

Many times there are those who choose to prostitute and sell drugs, I'm not one. I find that if you report in to the police they take their own sweet time to get to the scene or many times don't come at all. I know today by not addressing the problem it does not go away nor does it get better. I carry myself as a lady, and I don't like being targeted as a hooker when I choose to be walk down or up Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.

I will address this issue everytime it happens. Sometimes it's not likely to be addressed but, I'm writing to you. I read the Portland Observer, it's my community news and this is going on, on a daily basis.

Being a black female, we are always suppressed in some type of manner. We keep things because we don't feel anything will be done. Today I'm tired of not making the necessary move to correct what is not working in my community and allowing it to immobilize me. I'm a victim in many ways. I've been snatched off the street, and raped last year! Nothing was done about it, because the law felt it wasn't worth addressing. Change is upsetting and people will go to extremes to avoid being upset.

We will avoid thinking about or discussing a problem, until it becomes too big or too urgent to ignore, and that is the problem of women. Attacked and made a victim. At some point in their lives. And today I'm not a victim, after today but a survivor. But what about your daughter, your mother, or my sister. What will she do? Suppose it would have been three instead of one woman. In every crisis there is a message.

The message for me is it's still not safe on the streets and I can never forget that. But today I'm going to make it better for women like myself who know it exists. By telling the media we're sick and tired and we're fighting back.

Sincerely,
Rhonda S.
Survivor



Portland Observer encourages our readers to write letters to the editor in response to any articles we publish.

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Reinvestments in the Community

Proposed Relocation of Police Precinct Draws Mixed Reviews

BY DEAN CAMARDA

About 125 people attended a community forum at the King Neighborhood Facility concerning the proposed relocation of the Portland Police Bureau's North Precinct to a portion of the old Fred Meyer building at NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. and Killingsworth Street. The audience initially sat quietly and listened. Then it was time to hear the public. A stream of citizen's community group representatives stepped up to the microphone to voice their support for the move. They, along with several others, welcomed the police into their community, citing enhanced safety and economic renewal as the expected outcome. All signs seemed to indicate that having the police department as our new neighbors would be a win-win situation for all. That is until Walter Muhammed took his turn to speak.

"I think you need to stop," said Muhammed. "The people who are making decisions about this community don't live in it." Several people in the audience voiced their agreement as he continued. "These coalitions don't speak to our concerns because we don't belong to them. The bottom line is, they're [the police] coming in not patrolling, but controlling." From then on the forum gained momentum.

Woody Broderick stepped forward to express reservations. Broderick went so far as to accuse the police of wanting

to put an occupying force in the middle of our community. There were several who agreed with Broderick's concern about what he called a "cosmetic" approach to gathering community input. "There needs to be a real grassroots community meeting," said Walter Muhammed, adding, "Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. and Killingsworth is the hub of the black community. What's going to happen to the black folks that live in the area around the police?" Whether people were for or against the relocation plan, not everyone had the same reason. However, there was one common theme that resurfaced throughout the evening: the need for improved police-community relations.

Those who opposed the police precinct relocation expressed fears that tensions between the police and blacks are likely to increase. Portland Police Officer, Larry Anderson, disagreed. As a young black growing up in North-Northeast Portland, Anderson knows something about the apprehensions of some members of the black community. "I didn't know the police at all when I was growing up. I think it's a crime that a precinct hasn't moved here before now," said Anderson, who also is the basketball program coordinator for PAL [Police Action League], a program designed to enhance the relationship between police and youth. "I don't think it's 'relationship' that is the problem. I think it's the alienation - the

fact that they have been isolated from the police and the only time they deal with the police is when they have a problem or a negative situation. They don't have the opportunity because the police are not in the neighborhood to have the positive interaction. We're saying to the community, 'we don't want to be outsiders, we want to move in and become a part of your neighborhood.'"

Responding to the idea that the black community was not consulted at the grassroots level, Assistant to the Mayor, John Rodgers replied, "The thing about grass is that it's all over the place. I think the city has done a good job of getting input from the entire community... black and white." It is Rodgers' view that concerns about the negative impact of having a police facility in the area will be dispelled. "I have seen nothing but clear and convincing evidence that the commitment of Chief Potter is real," said Rodgers. "He's committed to community policing. I think the combination of the location of this facility and the genuine commitment of the police bureau to community policing - empowering the community to solve their own problems - those things together make this the right move at the right time."

Police Chief, Tom Potter, made his intentions clear. "We are here to serve the community, build positive relationships, and be accountable to you."



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