

Is There More To The Rodney King Verdict Than Meets The Eye?



BY JAMES L. POSEY

Does the Rodney King verdict show a pattern of how white folks generally make decisions about Black people? The now infamous case in south central Los Angeles involving the acquittal of white police officers by an all white jury reveals what most black people already instinctively know: In many circumstances where whites dominate the decision process, Black people generally don't get fair treatment or respect regardless of the domain. This is particularly true in the economic arena. Think about it. How does the Rodney King verdict and process compare to the many employment selection panels, contract selection boards, corporate and public commissions where Blacks have much at stake but little representation and few advocates. Make no mistake about it--the same racist dynamics that were so obvious in the King verdict is perhaps more sophisticatedly woven into the fabric of many other white dominated decisions affecting Black people. As an ironic example, it took the clout of a white oriented group, the Portland Organizing Project (POP) to point out and get action on the pervasive bank redlining of home loans in Northeast Portland. Many Black people have been telling

officials for years that the redlining is not just in housing, but across the board economically. The same reasoning and rationale process exhibited by the jurors in the King incident plays out here in Portland. Examine the responses to Black people seeking loans from lending institutions. Most of them act through white dominated loan committees, engage in blaming the victims. They use tried and true excuses like pointing to the lack of collateral and credit history to deny Blacks loans. Black people generally are not qualified to borrow significant amounts of money, particularly to start of expand a business. This is all in spite of the fact that similar to the video tape in the King incident, the picture is clear, these banks and other institutions (let's don't leave out the insurance companies) have brutally beat the Black community by divesting for years, eroding the business and employment base.

On another front, whatever one might think about Gabi's restaurant and club, what it really comes down to is whether or not the proprietor can get a fair hearing before the Oregon Liquor Control Commission. What about fairness on all the other commissions that are white dominated. We can only hope that their decisions about Blacks aren't based on the stereotypical notions so apparent on the King verdict. Can African-Americans get fair treatment at the Public Utilities, Communications, Transportation, Trade, Labor and various other commissions? This is not an all inclusive list, but gives some inkling of the various administrative bodies that make crucial decision effecting Black people outside of the criminal injustice systems? So the reasoning is that if we can't get justice in the criminal justice systems, God help us all in these other lesser administrative law proceedings.

Moving on to another front, what about the other end of the employment system? What about retention? Every time you turn around there is clear

evidence of front end employment discrimination, e.g., the recent disclosure of the Portland Development Commission hiring practices. The unemployment statistics for Blacks are even more gruesome than anyone really wants to admit. So in the retention battle, will Black people dis-proportionately take the brunt of Measure 5 cut backs? Of course the answer is yes. But the point is, who will be on many down-sizing/work force reduction committees and panels? How will they make decisions about who to retain and who to let go? What subjective criteria will they use to assess the value of the individual employee beyond job performance and seniority?

In Oregon the probability of these decision making bodies being all white is assured. Black people can only wonder if the same reasoning process will apply as in the Rodney King verdict. Will the decision makers be threaten by the prospects of Blacks being retained in representative numbers. Will Black people be seen as inherently not needing a job because they really belong on welfare anyway? Will this be a way of counter acting the effects of Affirmative Action which the majority of whites see as unfair and reverse discrimination? To say that white folks consciously go around trying to do Black folks in is a bit extreme even for the most racial commentary. However, conscious or unconscious, intentional or unintentional, the results are the same. We only have to review the exploits of slavery in this country or the Jewish Holocaust to know to what extent individuals, groups and governments will go to rationalize their racist behavior.

In Portland Black people and White people alike need to make sure that we don't get into the habit of de-humanizing another person or group of persons for the sake of self-interest and unfounded fears. Rodney King said it best "We're all in this together--Can we get along?"

perspectives

by Professor McKinley Burt

Let's Read This Summer, Continued

Last week I promised a list of African American Publishing companies for this issue--similar to the list of standard companies I did furnish. These were firms that furnished books of all categories including ethnic volumes. If you did not get a copy of the Portland Observer last week, pickup one at our office, 4747 N.E. Martin Luther King Blvd.

First, let me add some items that should have been included last week. For instance, a lot of readers, including teachers and students as well as the general public, complain of the difficulty of understanding how the U.S. government works; how to contact congressmen, committees, bureaus, departments, etc. and how to get information from them in respect to your interests or projects.

Let me recommend two of my "bibles" without which I couldn't get anything done. Get the "1992 U.S. Congress Handbook", \$9.95, from C-SPAN 400 North Capital Street, N.W., Suite 650, Washington D.C. 20001.

This well-organized, compact manual not only lists all congressmen, a brief background, phone/FAX/address and aides, but lists congressional committees, "Think tanks", congressional support offices, Executive branches, Supreme Court--and how these entities perform and interact. This manual is also good for high school and college classes in civics/government.

Now, for an in-depth and thorough coverage of the same areas of governmental functions, order this second manual, "The United States Government Manual", \$23.95, downtown at

the Federal Bookstore, 1305 S. W. First, Portland, OR 97201. Ask for the latest copy. Phone, 221-6217. Here, we have an expanded description and analysis of all departments and personnel of government, from Agriculture to Defense and from Education to Transportation. Organization chart, public access.

To that list of magazines add "The Discovery Channel Magazine" (cable channel 24). 12 months subscription, \$14.95, Discovery Publishing Inc. 7700 Wisconsin Ave., Bethesda, MD 20814. An excellent African American magazine you will not see on your newsstand is "Black Enterprise", 12 months subscription \$19.95, Box 3009, Harlan, IA 51537-4100, or use free toll line 1-800-727-7777. Those working in Counseling and Therapy, special education, youth and gangs, parents and/or families should get a catalog of print publications and video sets from "Research Press", dept. B, Box 3177, Champaign IL 61826-9988.

Again, I recommend for all of you who are about reading or writing whether for fun or profit--from age 8 to 80: "Roget's International Thesaurus", Fourth Edition. Takes over where the dictionary leaves off. About \$10.00 Daltons or your favorite bookstore. Now, if you want to dress up your study area or office in an attractive manner, get a catalog from "Reliable Home Office", P.O. Box 804117, Chicago, IL 60680-9968. Everything from fancy wall clocks to Fax/telephones, computers, files and furniture to lamps and copiers. Real Class! I order from them.

Through the years, I have faith-

fully cited the publications of Ivan Van Sertima the black author of "They Come Before Columbus".

Write for a list and prices. Ivan Van Sertima, Editor, Journal of African Civilization, Black Studies Dept., Beck Hall, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903. Those of you who like to research ancient history of black civilizations and others ask for catalog No. 32 (or later) "New & Used Books On The Ancient World", B&B Smith, Bookellers, P.O. Box 158, Mt Airy, MD 21771.

ECA Associates, P.O. Box 15004, Great Bridge Station, Chesapeake, Virginia 23320; free catalog. This firm carries such classic black history reprints as the famous four volumes of the "Book of the Beginnings" by Gerald Massey (1881) and his 4 volume "Ancient Egypt: The Light of The World" (1907). For that often quoted superclassic of the same type, "Anaclypsis" by Godfrey Higgins, Try Health Research, Box 70, Mokelumne Hill, Ca. 95245.

I leave off here for now because I just got a notice from "Donnies Accessories" at 925 N.E. Broadway that they have just added a Black Bookstore to their line of African American Jewelry, art and artifacts. The phone is 249-7204. The readers should let me know if they need additional sources (at the same time I am being told over the phone that I ought to have a copy of "The Black Power Imperative" by Theodore Cross; he wrote the 1970's classic "Black Capitalism", \$9.95 from Faulkner Books, 2513 Old Kings Highway North, Suite 107, Darien, Ct. 06820.

Regional Users Of Bull Run Water Supply Given Cutback Goals

Tualatin Valley Water District Administrator, Gene Seibel, joined City Commissioner Mike Lindberg and Mike Rosenberg of the Water Bureau to ask for cutbacks in water use, dropping consumption to 135 million gallons a day from a current high of 170-180 mgd.

The record breaking heat of May also brought a record-breaking early demand on the summer water supply. While reservoirs were full this spring, suppliers plan to start using reserves in early July. This year extraordinarily high demand started depleting reserves in late May.

"Our challenge as always," notes City Commissioner Mike Lindberg, "is to stretch supplies from the point

"We realize lawns are highly valued and we aren't yet at the point of asking people to give them up -- although we might if the summer continues to be hot and dry," acknowledged Lindberg. "What we are asking now is a conscientious effort to water appropriately, instead of over-watering. Of course, we encourage anyone who doesn't mind to let their

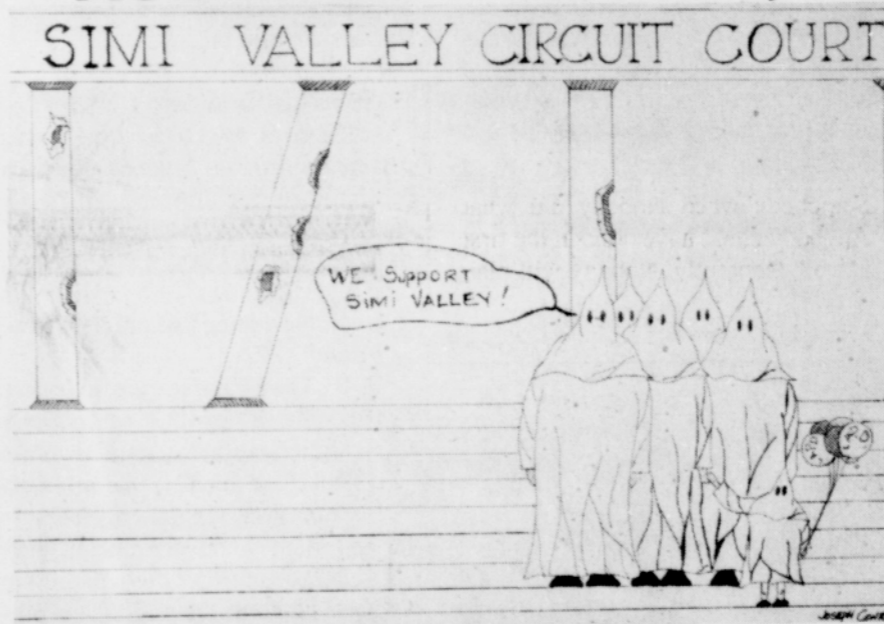
All residents of Multnomah County and water districts, such as Tualatin Valley Water District, using the Bull Run System are asked to follow these guidelines:

- Water Lawns only one inch, once a week;
- Water in the morning to avoid evaporation;
- Wash cars with a bucket, not a hose;
- Sweep hard surfaces rather than washing them;
- Turn the water off when not using it.

we start using our reserves until the rains start refilling the reservoirs in the fall. Early drawdown means we may have to stretch six weeks longer than normal. It will be very difficult to do that unless we start cutting back now."

lawn brown out this summer. We don't mean to pick on lawns, but clearly they represent the single largest use. Residential consumption more than doubles in the summer. Most of that water goes on lawns, and a lot of it is wasted."

"Rebellion" Not Riot, Says Tukufu



Urban League President Dr. Darryl Tukufu, in a recent speech to the City Club of Portland said "What happened in Los Angeles and other places (throughout this country) are and should be referred to as rebellions or revolts rather than riots. Dr. Tukufu defined a riot as a "spontaneous event with little or no psychological or political significance. It is usually of short duration. Examples of riots include incidents after teams have won the world series, super bowl, etc." Dr. Tukufu went on to say that "Rebellions or revolts break out due to some actual or perceived emphasis mine injustice that is tied to a system that is looked at as oppressive."

When taxpayers became concerned in California, the resultant revolt ended with proposition 13, the tax limitation measure. Likewise, in Oregon, with Measure 5 being the taxpayer revolt. Using the definition by Dr. Tukufu and having been a resident of both states when these measures were passed, it is clear that the taxpayer felt oppressed with the burden of taxes and felt that something needed to be done. Dr. Tukufu continued "Americans witnessed in 1984, an unprecedented African American turnout in the primaries in support of the really major black presidential candidate, the Rev. Jesse Jackson," said Dr. Tukufu. "In that year, Americans witnessed the most racially polarized vote in the history of the United States...with nearly two thirds of the white vote going to Ronald

Reagan while over 90 percent of the black vote went to Walter Mondale."

According to Dr. Tukufu, in the mid-1980's racism took the form of a frightening resurgence of activity by a range of extremist hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, The Order, The Aryan Nation and the Posse Comitatus, which included the murders of a Jewish talk show host in Denver, Co. and a state trooper in Missouri. In 1986, there was the well known rally held in Idaho by a coalition of these groups at which it was proposed to make several North-western states, including Oregon, a "white nation." In 1987, Klan violence sparked a massive civil rights march in Forsyth County, Ga. A black man died as a result of a racially motivated attack by whites in New York City. Here in Portland, there was the killing of Mulugeta Seraw.

Relating to the Rodney King incident, Dr. Tukufu believes that "justice was mugged twice." Once in March 1991, when this African American motorist was savagely beaten by Los Angeles police officers and again when a jury that did not include any African-Americans acquitted the officers of well documented charges that included assault and excessive force.

Dr. Tukufu said "the most basic fact is that fundamental and critical inequalities, based on race, ethnicity, gender and class continue to exist in American society. This remains true in spite of some reduction, at least to some

people, in overt discrimination, in spite of hundreds of civil rights laws, ordinances and court decisions at the federal, state and local levels, and in spite of the fact that conditions have substantially improved for a few people of color." Dr. Tukufu continued, "this is true whether we talk about income, education political representation or any other measure of status in American society. Furthermore, for most members of people of color communities, conditions have not improved, in fact, they have actually gotten worse.

Given Dr. Tukufu's remarks and what most black Americans feel and know to be their truth, there exists at least two Americas: one white and one black, as expressed by the Governor Kerner's report short after the 1965 rebellion.

If one examines the incidents leading up to the rebellion, along with the everyday existence of black America, it was no surprise that this incident had to happen. It is to the credit of the leaders of other communities that it did not get worse. The city of Portland and its black and white leaders are to be commended for its behavior in light of this incident. While there were certainly minor skirmishes, nothing of significance occurred.

Dr. Tukufu maintains that "community organizations and individuals, such as the Urban League, NAACP, Coalition of Black Men, Black United Fund, Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods and their affiliate organizations, Black Education Center, Portland State University African American Students, the Coalition for Human Dignity, Self Enhancement, Reps. Avel Gordly and Margaret Carter, Ray Leary, Commissioner Dick Bogle, Joyce Harris, Fred Stewart, Richard Brown, Bishop Wells, Dr. O. B. Williams, Rabbi Rose, Harold Williams, Macco Pettis, just to name a few, worked with each other and individually to keep the peace.

In Portland, we are fortunate to have a police chief such as Tom Potter and a precinct captain like Charles Moose. With their strategy of community policing and their desire to work closely with the community, it is doubtful that the LA incident could happen here.

Low-Income Family To Realize Dream

For Portland residents Josh and Susan Deitas and their five children, the American Dream of home ownership was nothing but that -- a dream.

Josh, a native of Micronesia and stockroom clerk for a local tool supplier, and Susan, a supplementary contract specialist for an insurance company, never believed that they would be able to afford a home of any kind. Then they learned

about Habitat for Humanity, the non-profit organization that makes no-interest loans to low-income families and arranges for the donations of labor and much of the building materials for homes. (As part of the arrangement, Habitat families must put in 500 hours of their own "sweat equity" into their homes.)

After Habitat volunteers completely refurbished an existing structure, the

Deitas have a new home. The finishing touch -- a coat of paint -- will be applied next week by the Deitas and more than 75 employee volunteers from Washington Mutual.

When: From 8:45 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday June 15, through Friday, June 19. Where: 8226 North Hurst, Portland

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