

## Are There Real Black Solutions To "The Black Problem?"



BY JAMES L. POSEY

Some have accused this writer of raising issues without providing solutions. I'm willing to accept that criticism if those who make it will acknowledge that Blacks have always presented a range of solutions. Just read WDB De

Bois, Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, Rev. King and more too many to mention. And while many Blacks and Whites would engage in much gnashing of teeth and wring of hands over what to do about "the Black Problem," the solutions have always been abundant and abundantly clear. Let's look at one.

What do you think Alice Walker, renowned author of "The Color Purple," The Gabi's Restaurant situation, and a call from the county's chief medical officer have in common. Can you imagine some connection between them and how black solutions are applied to "the Black Problem?" Let's look at the three seemingly unrelated factors.

Talking about relationships with her family, in an interview with Diane Sawyer on national TV, Diane asked Alice asked if her portrayal of Black men beating up on Black women in her novel "The Color Purple" stirred much resentment from her brothers. She quickly replied to Ms. Sawyer, "You must presume my brothers read." Although the entire interview was thought provoking, the thing that jumped out at me was the suggestion that you can't take for granted that Black people are reading. This simple realization may have something to do with how Black people act, violently or otherwise. More importantly, I think you can safely assume that this discussion explains to a large degree Black people's response

or lack of response to their condition. Near the end of the interview, Alice acted like Diane was about to get on her last nerve. But Alice presented the historically simple but powerful solution that as a first step, Brothers and Sisters must be about reading.

Well how does reading and violence play in the Gabi's restaurant and club situation? If you've been following the story you know that the Oregon Liquor Control Commission has been trying to close the club down because of alleged violent activity. I guess I'm trying to make a point. As we all know there is an epidemic of violent activity in our community that it's not going to be stopped or even slowed by closing that particular establishment. Many young people who frequent places like Gabi's are cranked and juiced with adolescent energy, packed with frustration, and have long since abandoned real prospects for the future. Add some

parents to reclaim responsibility for their children's education despite the racist tendencies of the Portland school system.

Traditionally, Black people have stressed escaping the effects of racism and poverty through education. And while there has been some gains for Blacks in education, the link between today's Black violence and deficits in education is strong. This is all connected to the lack of self-esteem and powerlessness rooted in generational poor education of Black youth that leaves them generally unprepared to compete economically in today's society. Realistically the education system will not be changed anytime soon. But the truth that if Blacks took it upon themselves to read more, at least I am sure there would be fewer artificial initiatives focused on ways to deal with Black violent behavior. In Portland and across the country the number

one cause of death for young Black males is homicide. The call from the county's chief medical officer was to discuss the prospects of an upcoming grant dealing with Black youth effected by violent environments. While I have an interest in the project, I could not help but to think that the time and money could be better spent by helping

young Black people improve their reading skills. If I had any thing to do with it, the focus would not be just on reading for fun but to identify opportunities and make economic change. As boring as the notion might sound, I would try to get young Black people into the habit of reading documents like program operation budgets. Because if you ask me, this is where the real violence takes place against Black people. It may be a bit dry at first, but if you want to read a real horror story for example, get a copy of Portland Development Commission's 1992 budget and see if you can get emotionally rapped up in why the African American community is excluded. Not just picking on the PDC, get a copy of the Port of Portland or any of the other large municipal bodies and read the same gruesome plot.

So I hope I have made the point, as one simple Black solution, reading is more than fundamental, it's essential to changing the status quo and understanding the concept of, "the survival of the fittest."

**"Because although we know Blacks are not getting an equal quality education in this country and certainly not in Portland, there ain't no chains on library doors, no one is twisting Black parents arms making them spend money on rap CDs rather than books."**

alcohol and whatever else to this chemistry and what can you expect -- "Boom." The larger community must know by now that Blacks, particularly Black males are angry and mad as hell and especially prone to violence (and we ain't just talking kids). The point is that much of this violence is directly related to what everyone knows -- historical lack of education that eventually means fewer economic opportunities. But, let's be clear, this is not a "let us blame the white folks article." Because although we know Blacks are not getting an equal quality education in this country and certainly not in Portland, there ain't no chains on library doors, no one is twisting Black parents arms making them spend money on rap CDs rather than books. A simple solution is that Black people have fewer choices than whites, therefore they must make better choices, particularly when it comes to children. The need for better Black education is one area where I am in complete agreement with the "Herdonites." Except, I would focus more on the need to encourage Black

### Blumenauer To Announce Recommendations To Goldschmidt Task Force

City Commissioner Earl Blumenauer will hold a news conference Monday to announce his recommendations to a task force chaired by former Governor Neil Goldschmidt that could save millions of tax dollars by restructuring state and local government services.

"Most of these proposals are steps

state and local officials can take now to cut spending," said Blumenauer. "We should return these savings to the public by providing new public safety services and reducing costs to the taxpayer."

Blumenauer will speak at 10:30 a.m., Room 321, City Hall, 1220 S.W. Fifth Avenue. Goldschmidt is chairing

a task force to scrutinize local services in Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas Counties for overlapping functions and duplication. The group will report to Governor Barbara Roberts in August.

# perspectives

by Professor McKinley Burt

## Education Update Continued

I seem to have shaken up some parents last week when I brought them up to date on just how serious is the situation of Oregon's System of Higher Education. According to the administrators, fully one half of the college-bound will find no slots by 1994! And the remaining opportunities may be too expensive for many.

It is rewarding to have those phone calls from readers who are aware that I keep up my information base by sampling those out-of-town minority newspapers to see what are the current problems facing African Americans; education or otherwise. As useful as this may be (on my part and others), I stand by my suggestion that what is really needed is an African American Education Summit. There are many disturbing events on the horizon--or closer, and it will take a structured response to deal with them.

For instance, the Voucher folks have surfaced again with a vengeance. The president of Yale University has just resigned in order to head up the most sophisticated private enterprise firm yet to make a bid for the billions of dollars of Taxpayer Monies which might be siphoned off from the public school systems of the country. The glowing public relations material already developed by the multi-million dollar corporation emphasizes choice and sheds copious tears for the "disadvantaged blacks forced to attend inferior schools".

This Voucher/Choice movement with its promise to emancipate both minorities and whites from their "failed urban education systems" should not catch us entirely by surprise. It was just two years ago that here in Oregon we were told by Oregonians For Educational Choice, "Schools that must compete will improve or lose students".

They mounted a very active campaign which, had it succeeded, would have amended the Oregon constitution; Ballot Measure 11, "School Choice System, Tax Credit For Education Outside Public Schools."

And across the country in Milwaukee, 1990, we saw a Choice Program passed into law where the state was sending \$2500 per pupil to private schools for students whose parents had elected to make that "choice". Unfortunately in these programs, the money sent to private schools is subtracted from money available to the public schools. The amount is "written-in-stone" whether the private school is charging \$600 or \$6,000 per family. The Milwaukee law was later declared unconstitutional, but as we have seen the idea is very much alive and has well financed, national backing.

The very serious problems that a Voucher/Choice system holds for public schooling and minority or disadvantaged students in particular were very well articulated some time ago; locally by the City Club and, nationally, by African American legislator, Augustus Hawkins of California. In an unanimous report the local organization concluded about Ballot Measure 11, "too vague in its approach to open enrollment, too ambitious in diverting funding from public to private education and too restrictive of further regulation of non-public education."

Mr. Hawkins got right to the heart of the matter in the national press, "close evaluation of Voucher/Choice programs reveals that they are neither the bargain nor salvation the creators would have you believe... Private schools making the decisions on eligible students select those with the best grades who are the easiest to educate."

He said further, "Another major issue is the treatment of handicapped students. Public Schools are required to provide fair and equal education to such students, including teachers and appropriate services. Private School Have No Such Legal Obligations". Hawkins conceded that Choice Programs may help some students, but we find him in consensus with the great majority of thinking people across the land. "Disadvantaged" people are just that; they don't have the means, techniques or organizations prepared to deal with or evaluate these new "Choice"

interface. They're trying to catch up with the Public Schools.

Now, what we find interesting is the fact that there has been formed in the cities of Los Angeles and Chicago, a "Non-Profit Institute for Justice; a national organization that mounts suits for black parents Who Want Voucher Systems. Also, we have it that in Chicago 46% of public school teachers send their children to Private Schools. It is probable that the same percentage or greater obtains in most cities; the landscape is not clearly defined.

So it is that I suggested last week that an "Education Summit" is urgently needed. Issues, options and systems need to be examined and evaluated at both the district school and higher education levels. This approach would include socio economic strategies for the family and for a more effective exploitation of employment opportunities in respect to both student and parent. It would be most rewarding if a permanent organization structure would evolve from this interaction, one that use the best expertise and information technology available in the community. To be continued next week.

## Committee Recommends 19 North Portland Projects For Funding

The Metropolitan Service District's North Portland Enhancement Committee has recommended 19 projects to receive \$100,000 in North Portland Rehabilitation and Enhancement funds for the 1992-93 fiscal year, according to Metro councilor Sandi Hansen, committee chair. The committee received 43 proposals with a total requested dollar amount of \$362,175.

The seven-member committee of North Portland residents, appointed by the North Portland Community and Metro, solicits proposal and recommends how the funds should be used to best benefit the area. In addition to Hansen, committee members Pam Arden, Linda Crum, Steve Roso, Beverly Scott, Jim Michels and Mark Williams.

The fund was established in 1985 to benefit North Portland neighborhoods seen to be impacted by the St. Johns Landfill. Funds were generated by a fee of 50 cents per ton for material disposed at the landfill. The landfill was closed to commercial haulers in October 1991. Rehabilitation and enhancement fees are no longer collected, but interest has accrued on the remaining principal. It is the goal of the committee to perpetuate the funding to help meet the needs of the commu-

nity and add to its enrichment and enhancement. Currently, there is more than \$2 million in the fund. The money set aside for projects is part of the annual interest earned by the fund.

With the 19 new grants, the committee has funded 75 projects totalling \$511,469. Not all projects funded received the full amount requested. Most of the proposals had matching funds in the form of either cash, material or labor, making the grant impact at much higher dollar amount.

\$400 grant request from the Kenton Neighborhood Association to hire a jazz group to play at the Peninsula neighborhood staging area in Kenton Park on July 12, 1992. The Peninsula Neighbor Ride will be the first in a series of rides hosted by neighborhood associations and sponsored by the Bureau of Transportation.

\$4,000 grant request from the Kenton Neighborhood Association to support the distribution of 16,500 copies of Neighbors Between the Rivers, a bi-monthly publication distributed to all residents of North Portland.

\$6,000 grant for Phase II of Project TAPROOT requested from the Kenton Neighborhood Association to continue the planting of 300 trees on the north and south berms of North Colum-

bia Boulevard extending from I-5 freeway overpass border by Kenton, to North Chautauqua. The object is to provide visual beautification of the industrial area, as well as being a noise, odor and toxic filter for the community.

\$500 North Portland Alano Association grant to be used to create more available meeting space in the present facility.

\$2,290 Northwest Ecological Research Institute grant for Smith-Bybee Wildlife Watch program involving residents of North Portland, from students to retired people, in monitoring wildlife at Smith and Bybee lakes and enhancing habitat.

\$15,000 North Portland Enhancement Committee grant to help qualified low-and moderate-income first-time home buyers to purchase a home within the North Portland enhancement area boundary. This grant will be tied in with other lending sources to add to the available money for low-and moderate-income potential home buyers.

\$20,000 Open Meadows Learning Center grant to exercise an option to purchase the historic Benson-Chaney building to house the center, an essential alternative education service for North Portland youths.

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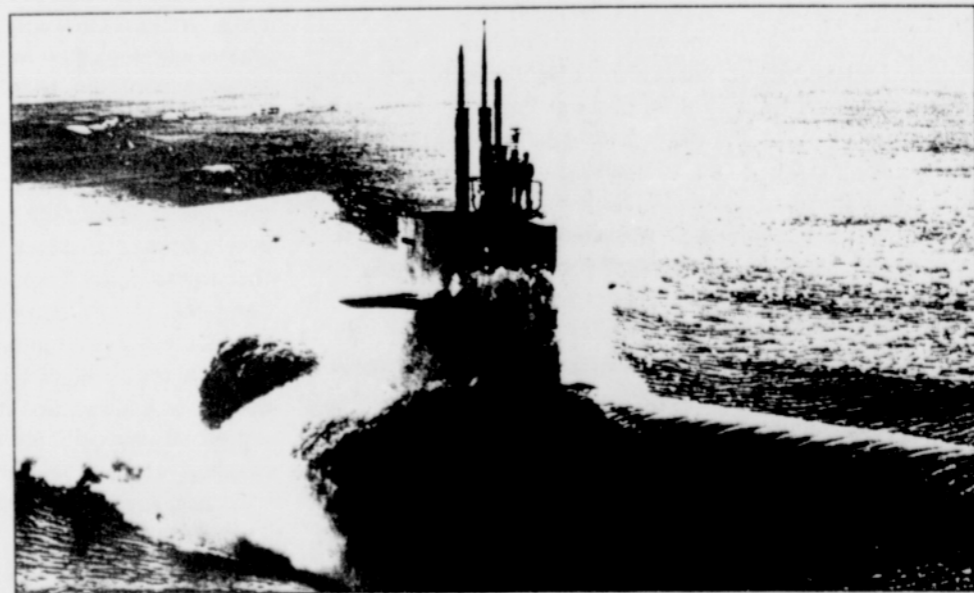
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