

Another Black Solution: "Be Present"

BY JAMES L. POSEY

One most enlightening lessons retaught to me during my brief association with National Black Women Health Project and the remarkable Black women aligned with that organization was the concept of "being present." The concept is not new because it's basic to most psychological treatment theories. Yet, when you put it into perspective of the "Black Problem," it has a Big Time meaning.

Let me explain. What most African Americans take for racism, prejudice and discrimination may instead be just a total disregard for Black people because of their lack of presence. For example instead of thinking of some White people as members of the K K K, try thinking of many of them in a different way. Think of some of them as members of the I I I group (Ignorant, Indifferent and Intolerant.) Can you see how this condition could easily exist in Portland. When really get right down to it, the truth is there are very few places outside of Northeast where real Black people exist. Which leaves room for normally decent Whites to conjure up any notions about black people they choose. Guess what notions they have chosen to conjure up?

The second part of the problem is that even when there is a physical presence of Black people there may not be a spiritual presence. In other words, in many places Blacks are represented by Black skin instead of by Black soul. Real Black people are "Not Present." This is true because in many cases the more "Black" you are the less likely you will be hired in the first place.

There are splatterings of Black people all-round the city in places like, banks, insurance offices, government agencies, etc. In most situations they are absorbed into the white main stream, almost invisible but vulnerable products of the "last hired first fired mentality." Many Blacks in hostile employment situations aren't about to rock the boat or do nothing to call undo attention to themselves. They are afraid to "Be Present."

But I am glad to say that the above scenario is not always the case. There are examples of Black people being

present. For example, every Black person in Portland ought to be proud of the few Black employees at the Portland Development Commission (PDC). These brother and sisters organized themselves to fight against obvious acts of discrimination and racism at that organizations. We know the hell they went through and are probably still going through in that organization. Similar black employee heroics occurred at Portland Community College a few months back.

I am overjoyed to hear that one of my former Black co-workers at the U.S Forest Service had brought a discrimination complaint against a Forest Service union official for making racially inappropriate remarks about a newly developed African American forest fire fighting crew. Becky Black and Oregon Youth Outreach had to go through hell to get the Forest Service to employ community Black youth in what is traditionally an all "white thang".

I surely don't want to leave out the Black dump trucking business owner who turned down a contract with a white firm. The white firm was trying to get him as a front. The white firm tried to get the Black owner to use his minority business status (DBE) to pass money and opportunity back to his firm or other white associates. The deal was that the brother was suppose to this in exchange for a token part of a subcontract. The Black owner reported the incident to Oregon Department of Transportation civil rights section who took action against the white firm. I have not been ashamed to criticize ODOT (who's civil rights manager is a Black woman) in the past. In this instance, I am happy to commend ODOT and only hope they keep it goin on.

There are other situations where Black people are standing up and being present. But you can believe it's more of the exception than the rule. As most of us know, Black organization reflect this lack of real Black presence. When was the last time you heard of the NAACP jump on something, take a stand, follow through and rectify in favor of Black people? Where is Operation PUSH since they really did force Nike to move in the right

direction but got beat up in the process?

I hate to mention the Portland Urban League because they have this selective stand up posture. They stand up when they feel it's not going to hurt their corporate image. Blacks in Government is almost non-existent in community affairs. They must only exist when there is a need to hold a regional conference. Has anybody seen the Coalition of Black Men lately? The Black United Front stands up the best, but something is wrong when they promote a march against racism through the heart of the Black community and there are more white folks, news media and police in the march than black people.

It is a sad irony when a white group, the City Club has to come up with a scathing condemnation of the whole city's lack of commitment to diversity. Its even sadder when the Black community lacks response. There is the sense that Portland can acknowledge the problem of racism and articulate it also anybody. But the city is equally impotent as anybody to do anything about it. What is really clear is that not much will be done unless Black people "become present" and take matters in to their hands and do something about it. Real Black people need to join the NAACP and the Urban League and these other organizations. More than that, not enough to just criticize. Community Black people need to go to these organization's board meetings and hold their board member's feet to fire when it comes to taking on issues that they know will negatively affect Black people. Then they should influence those other groupie organizations like the fraternities and sororities and let them know that while it's OK to have a few dinners and social events, the real problems of the Black community should have priority and be addressed first by their organizations. Thinking about solutions, perhaps the Black United Fund or some other organization could organize a Blacks in Crisis summit right here in Portland --- ASAP. It would be spectacular for many Black people to come together, to "Be Present," to solve Black problems, all while at the same place.

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

By Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

"Echoes From Brazil"

The single largest gathering of world leaders and heads of state were together at the recent United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held for 12 days in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. We were fortunate to be present in Rio for this historic international conference. The words, speeches, commitments and even some of the rhetorical affronts uttered should be remembered mainly for content but also for an understanding of the contemporary world situation on the questions of justice and liberation for the "developing nations" of the world.

Our purpose here is to quote and comment on the stated positions of several of the heads of state that addressed the Earth Summit in Rio. Our analysis is devoted to viewing whether or not there is in fact increasing international cooperation on protecting the environment in the context of worldwide economic development. Now that the so-called East vs. West conflict is over, there is talk of the North vs. South conflict or in other words the conflict between the "developed nations" and the "developing nations" of the world. The United States, Germany, Great Britain, France, Japan and other industrialized nations have been challenged by the "developing nations" to decrease industrial pollution and to assist in environmentally-safe economic development. Yet, looming behind these international tensions is the question "Why are the developing nations underdeveloped?"

It is always interesting to note how peoples who have been oppressed and exploited historically are often put in the position of debating with their former or present oppressors the question of responsibility for human degradation. The debate in Brazil exposed this contradiction.

Most persons have already heard that President Bush was the only major head of state who refused to sign the Earth Summit's Biodiversity Convention which advanced the international understandings of the "just" appropri-

ation of the natural resources of the developing nations by the industrialized nations and the responsibilities of the "rich" nations to work harder to protect the environment. Bush went to Rio in the wake of the ashes of Los Angeles, ironically, Bush's arrogance was nearly an isolated phenomenon given the fact the other leaders of the industrialized nations signed the biodiversity treaty.

A nation or a society that deliberately tolerates human degradation is also a nation or society that will tolerate environmental degradation. Throughout the UNCED summit, there were forceful demands issued for both social and economic justice as a prerequisite for environmental justice.

President Fernando Collor of Brazil was the Chairman of the United Nations' summit in Rio. President Collor stated, "This is the largest international summit meeting in history. Being the largest in size, it must be the greatest in results. This meeting must stand as a response to the great challenge of saving life on earth. The world's people expect much from their leaders, whose duty it is to work to implement the decisions taken at Rio rapidly and efficiently." Collor's remarks were indicative of the sense of urgency at the Earth Summit. Some scientists believe that in less than ten years the current rate of global environmental destruction will reach the point of irreversibility and thus destine the earth's ecological balance to permanent damage.

Even Britain's Prime Minister John Major attempted to confess the importance of protecting the world's environment, but sought to avoid admitting that much of the responsibility for the massive rate of environmental destruction has come from massive and unjust exploitation of both natural and human resources. Major chided, "The environment has become a vital interest for all. Much of the damage has been not out of greed, but out of ignorance." Oh...how is it that those who have in the past laid claim to "intellectual superiority" now

claim and "ignorance" about the impact and the effect of centuries of colonialization that advanced the present post-modern era of technology and industry.

Although the United States is proportionately the world's greatest polluter and destroyer of the global environment, President Bush's famous words at the summit were, "I will not offer an apology for what we are doing." The Lord moves in mysterious ways. The one head of state that received the largest applause and a rare standing ovation at the summit was President Fidel Castro.

President Castro affirmed, "An important biological species is disappearing---Human. It deserves mention that the consumer societies are responsible for the atrocious state of the environment. With only 20% of the world's population,, they consume two thirds two thirds of its metal and three quarters of its energy. They have poisoned the waters and air and saturated the atmosphere with gases that produce catastrophic affects. Now when there are no pretexts for cold war and arms races, what prevents the immediate use of those resources for the environment?" Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany explained, "The industrial countries have a particular responsibility in securing environmental protection and sustainable development and are called upon to handle natural resources more carefully than they have in the past."

Perhaps it was said the best by President Jose Eduardo dos Santos of Angola. President Dos Santos concluded, "The most important thing, however---much more important than blaming one another for the ecological imbalance---is finding the unity to confront the problems." Yes, the international unity won in Rio was historic and remains as a profound necessity for those of us who live in the United States to strengthen our collective voices, demands and struggles for environmental justice in solidarity with our sisters and brothers throughout the world.

Brochure Available To Help Oregonians Through Recession

With the recession causing Oregon's unemployment rate to rise just below eight percent, many Oregonians are worried about their job security and financial future. To assist those individuals facing unusually difficult economic times, the Oregon Society of Certified Public Accountants has a brochure available entitled, "Managing Through An Economic Downturn."

The brochure offers tips on how to modify your financial behavior to effectively cope with the economic downturn.

Retired Portland School Superintendent Prophet To Speak At WOSC Lecture Series

Matthew W. Prophet, who recently retired as Superintendent of Portland Public Schools after a decade of service, will relay "Good News About American Education" during a lecture at Western Oregon State College on Thursday, July 9 at 11:45 a.m. in the Instructional Technology Center Auditorium.

Prophet, one of the most highly respected educators in the nation, will take a positive look at the United States' educational system--a system often portrayed in a state of decline. He will examine reports that American students actually are excelling in many areas.

Under Prophet's leadership, Portland's 112 public schools have made dramatic progress in student achievements. The district's drop-out rate is among the lowest in the United States for urban schools systems. Minority and at-risk students have improved by more than 60 percent in mathematics and have made significant gains in reading.

The recipient of more than 250 awards and certificates since beginning his public education career in 1971, Prophet also was decorated with the Bronze Star and Legion of Merit award during his twenty years of service in the United States Army. He currently is the president of the Large City Schools Superintendents organization for the United States and Canada. A member of many educational organizations, he has served on the board of directors for the Institute of Educational Leadership, Inc., and the Center for Excellence in Education.

The brochure explores such topics as rethinking your insurance coverage, investing, limiting your borrowing and scaling back on discretionary spending.

To request your free copy of "Managing Through An Economic Downturn" write: Oregon Society of CPAs, 10206 SW Laurel Street, Beaverton, OR 97005-3209.

The Oregon Society of CPAs is a statewide professional organization of certified public accountants with a membership of over 4,100.

The presentation is part a lecture series, titled "Summer perspectives: Celebrate Teaching--Past, Present and Future," that commemorates the 100th anniversary of WOSC Summer Sessions. All lectures will be held at 11:45 a.m. in the Instructional Technology Center Auditorium. The complete lecture schedule follows:

Wednesday, July 9 - "Educators and Change: Immovable Mountains to the 'Man in the Moon,'" Tom Stone, 1992 Milken Foundation Award recipient, mathematics teacher, Sheldon High School, Eugene.

Thursday, July 9 - "Good News About American Education," Matthew W. Prophet, retiring superintendent, Portland Public Schools.

Wednesday, July 15 - "Alternative Assessment in Mathematics," Winnie Miller, 1992 Milken Foundation Award recipient, mathematics teacher, Hillsboro High School, Western Oregon State College alum.

Thursday, July 16 - "Those Who Can Teach; Those who Can't Research," John Minahan, Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Western Oregon State College.

Thursday, July 23 - "Education: Compulsory to Age 18 or 81?," Milton Stern, International Government Studies Fellow, University of California, Berkeley; former associate professor at the University of Michigan Graduate School of Education; Dean Emeritus, University Extension, University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Stern is an internationally recognized leader in continuing education.

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Local Citizens Appointed As Ombudsmen

Sandra Malloy and Denise Woo, were recently appointed by Meredith Cote, the Long Term Care Ombudsman for the State of Oregon, to serve as Certified Ombudsmen in Multnomah county. They will serve as advocates for the residents of nursing homes and adult foster care homes, helping to ensure they receive the best possible care.

Ms. Malloy of Southeast Portland is being assigned to Graceland Terrace Care Center. She works in the Philosophy Department at Portland State University.

Mrs. Woo of Northeast Portland will serve three adult foster care homes in the Northeast area. She is a recent graduate of Portland State University.

The Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman is a program of the State of Oregon, dedicated to protecting the rights, safety and dignity of the residents of nursing homes, residential care facilities and adult foster care homes. The next volunteer training series will be held in Portland on September 12, 1992. Call 1-800-522-2602 for more information on becoming a Certified Ombudsman, or to report a concern about a facility.

HOSTA & DAYLILY SHOW

Where:

Portland Nursery

5050 SE Stark

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When:

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For more information contact Jay or Chuck: 873-6875 or Joe 873-2218.



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"Outdoor Classroom" For The Entire Family Offered At Leach

Leach Botanical Garden, a cooperative between Portland Parks and Recreation and Leach Botanical Garden Friends Group, is offering an Outdoor Classroom for the entire family. This three-class series is free and will be held on Saturdays, July 11th, 25th and August 8th, from 10:00 am to Noon, at Leach Botanical Garden, 6704 SE 122nd Ave. This series is geared toward the youngest family participant and covers an introduction into such topics

as: flowers, distinguishing shapes and colors, ferns, layers of the forest, trees, Indian lore, creek life, gardens and garden manners, and forest wildlife including birds and squirrels.

Pre-registration is required and classes are limited to 25 participants. An adult must accompany children throughout the class series.

To register or for more information, call Leach Botanical Garden at 791-9503.

New Coordinator of REACHOUT! Program Named

Peggy L. Jones has recently been named interim coordinator of the REACHOUT! volunteer program to southeast Portland, succeeding Brenda S. Lind, who has resigned to explore other options.

Mrs. Jones has been a volunteer coordinator before, and brings a varied background of other experience to the position, including volunteer work, teaching, youth work, tax preparation, and telephone fundraising.

REACHOUT! has existed since 1982 as an ecumenical outreach effort of many southeast and northeast Portland churches. Volunteers from these churches fill requests taken by the coordinator for low income, elderly, physically, and mentally challenged residents. The requests must be for tasks that the person cannot perform himself or herself, through other agencies, or through able friends and relatives. Re-

quests are sometimes made by case-workers of other agencies. REACHOUT! provides volunteer help only and cannot fill needs for food, shelter, clothing or financial assistance.

About seventy-five percent of requests to REACHOUT! are for transportation for medical appointments, shopping and other needs. Volunteers also do minor home maintenance and repair, mowing and yardwork, housecleaning and meal preparation, child care and respite care, visitation of the homebound, financial, legal advice, and certain other professional services. The organization can also make referrals to other agencies for requests it cannot fill.

Churches and individuals interested in volunteering or learning more about REACHOUT! are encouraged to call Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at 234-6333.