

# perspectives

by Professor McKinley Burt

## Education Update: Conclusion

Of course, we know that we can never "conclude" such an essential approach to improving our situation in the fuzzy scheme of things. But, rest assured that we will keep our readers as well advised in the area of education as we do in other fields critical to our community.

Throughout this series we have highlighted the special situation of the African American woman; not that many of the problems cited do not apply equally to males. But, as we have emphasized, there has been a quite serious gender gap when it comes to providing females with challenging curriculum and academic guidance. In addition to an improved educational support mode, we have suggested such activities as community programs for young black girls in the same mode as we provide for "endangered black males".

Reader response to my July 1 article on the SAT (scholastic Aptitude Test) indicate that I need to repeat my 1989 series on "I.Q. Tests". This is because racists (and the simply naive) are again using the same faulty and denigrating logic to postulate inferior intelligence of minorities when assessing the results of either test(s). And, unbelievably, ten years after the classic rebuttal of "scientific racism" by Stephen Jay Gould in his book, "The Mismeasure of Man" the enemy has risen from the ashes; at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

We thought that Gould's award

winning book (Norton publishers, 1981) had buried forever the garbage of racism like Jensen and Shockley, the charlatans who got reams of media (and academic attention) with the claim that blacks, Asians and Indians were genetically inferior in terms of an "innate intelligence". But, now, researchers at MIT and the Salk Institute claimed several weeks ago in the respected journal "Science" that they have discovered A Gene Essential To Learning!

Predictably, the national media (Portland included) almost without fail used a bold black headline like "Research Links Gene to Process Of Learning" and only in a sub-headline (if at all) noted that their experiments were performed on MICE! Now, a well-rounded idiot can see where this is going to lead. You don't have to be a neuroscientist--just have the mother wit of any minority who has had to mature in this vale of tears. As I always say, "eternal vigilance is the price of our survival".

Let me round out this series with some comments and advices I may not have had space for in particular articles. I did recommend the Urban League's Whitney Young Program as a place where parents could secure tutorial aid for their children. Additionally, I would suggest, as a specific case, involvement in the Boise-Elliott Second Grade Summer School. It is a parent-child reading support group whose "goal is to accelerate their children's reading achieve-

ment and encourage school and community parent-child reading involvement." Hopefully, this structure can be modified for year-round sessions, and that the program will proliferate community wide.

More on that "Choice" game; Several weeks ago I revealed that a curious new organization had sprung up in Los Angeles and Chicago backing small groups of black parents in filing civil suits against the school systems in an effort to force immediate granting of "Choice Voucher" which would enable them to immediately withdraw their children from neighborhood schools and attend one of the parents "Choice". Naturally, a prorata share of monies would also be withdrawn from the original financially-strapped ghetto school, leading to further deterioration of the inner-city education process.

As suspected, this turns out to be a back door game of the Bush Administration. A leading conservative, Clint Bolick, has organized the "Institute For Justice" to carry out this attack and big time Right Wing money is funding the program (will Portland be next?). Unfortunately, a black woman appointee of the Bush Administration is backing this program. (Assistant Secretary of Education, Carolyn Reid-Wallace). On a network program she said, "I'm qualified to support this. I've got a PHD in English"??). Both Jesse Jackson and Robert Chase, president of the National Education, are in firm opposition.

# CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

By Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

## Kente Cloth Justice

African American lawyers are often confronted with the social and racial tensions in the "criminal" justice system. The refusal by an Anglo American judge in Washington, D.C. to allow an African American attorney to wear a traditional African "Kente Cloth" stole part of his attire in the courtroom reveals once again the deep seated racism institutionalized in American courts.

Attorney John T. Harvey III is an experienced trial lawyer in Washington, D.C. who has distinguished himself as an effective and very competent legal advocate for the right of his client before the judicial bar. Harvey also is a devoted member of an African American local church, Faith United Church of Christ, that affirms an Afro-centric approach to the Christian faith. Leaders and members of Faith United Church of Christ are required to wear Kente cloth as an outward expression of one's inward celebration of the blessings and gifts that one has been given by God. This is a positive affirmation well-rooted in the Afro-Christian tradition. It is spiritual as well as cultural. For the sake of comparison, for an African American to wear Kente cloth is not culturally or spiritually different from a Jewish American wearing a yarmulke.

Judge Robert M. Scott of the District of Columbia Superior Court has ruled against allowing Attorney Harvey

to wear the Kente cloth stole in his courtroom. It was clear at a hearing earlier this year that Judge Scott was predisposed to be in contempt of any African American lawyer who would dare to cross the threshold of his courtroom wearing Kente cloth. The fact that Judge Scott knew in advance what Kente cloth looked like is instructive to the prior bias that Scott already maintained.

Last February Attorney Harvey appeared before Judge Scott to argue on behalf of an African American defendant in a felony case. Attorney Harvey wore a Kente cloth stole around a suit with a white shirt and tie. Even before allowing Harvey to proceed with preliminary statements to the court, Judge Scott stated to the lawyer that there were only three options: "remove the stole, resign from the case, or let trial be with out a jury." Of course, both to defend the interests of his client and to defend his personal dignity and integrity, Attorney Harvey declined to accept any of Judge Scott's options.

Four months later Judge Scott then takes the issue in his own hands and summarily dismisses Attorney Harvey from the case on a technicality because the client has a court-appointed attorney arrangement. But, it was clear to everyone present in the courtroom that the reason why Judge Scott dismissed Attorney Harvey was because he was

still wearing the Kente cloth stole. Scott claimed that if there were African Americans on the jury, a fact common in Washington, D.C. because it is a predominantly African American city, then those jurors would be influenced by the sight of Attorney Harvey's Kente cloth in the courtroom. That was indeed bizarre reasoning on the part of Judge Scott, but it is also very revealing.

Why do non-African American judges fear African American culture? Is this judge trying to say that African Americans lose their sense of honesty or objectivity whenever they are in the presence of or the sight of something related to African American culture? Judge Scott's ruling is an insidious affront to the African American community. Judge Scott is the one who needs to be removed from the courtroom.

Yet, this incident is only symptomatic of the kind of prejudice and racial inequities that African Americans and other people of color have had to endure for a long time. The good news is that lawyers like Attorney Harvey are not going to be submissive to this form of racial discrimination. We say to Brother Harvey, "Keep the faith! Continue to stand for justice!"

Finally, we wonder aloud: "What is the color of the robe that Judge Scott wears when he is off the bench?"

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

## City Commissioner Dick Bogle Repeats 'Racial Motivation' Charge Against Mayor

I stand by my statement that Mayor Clark's action was racially motivated. As to his supposed reason for taking the bureau--to "centralize planning for a new Emergency Communications Center"--I say, that's ridiculous.

In the first place, he did not have to take the bureau away to achieve his stated aim. BOEC and the 9-1-1 levy project are two separate entities. It's the levy project, not the bureau, that he claims he needs in his portfolio.

The real reason for his action is that I was in the process of forcing Gary Schrader, the director of BOEC, to face up to his miserable performance in hiring and retaining minorities.

On Monday of this week, I informed Schrader that I had asked Robert Phillips, the city's affirmative action officer, to conduct an affirmative action evaluation of BOEC.

At the same time, I directed Schrader to provide cultural sensitivity training for all personnel at BOEC, including management. I gave him until July 17th to come up with a written training program outline and training schedule.

The following day (Tuesday, July

7th), I sent a strongly worded memorandum to Schrader, scoring him for his failure to establish a recruitment and examination structure consistent with my agenda for an enhanced affirmative action process.

I ordered him to take specific steps to correct that failure.

I concluded by writing: "This is my highest priority and my strongest commitment. I am ordering you to effect these directives immediately."

Early Thursday (July 9), I formalized the appointment of a personnel officer at BOEC to see to it that my orders were carried out.

At 2:30 p.m., in the middle of a hearing on a liquor license application, the mayor's executive assistant, David Kish, brought a memo to my office informing me of the mayor's action. My executive assistant carried it to council chambers.

The action was retroactive to 8 a.m. In other words, my appointment of the personnel officer was null and void.

Racism is no longer a "White's Only" sign in a store window. It takes a more subtle form in this day and age. It can surface in a decision which appears

to have a quite different explanation.

I am not calling Mayor Clark a racist. By his own admission, he failed to discuss the situation with me prior to jumping in with both feet. He was misled by bureaucrats--white males who pay lip service to equal opportunity, but whose "good old boy" mentality serves to drive minorities from the work place.

The hostile atmosphere at BOEC prompted my action. Blacks, especially women, have left because they felt unwelcome--and worse, overtly discriminated against.

At present, there are only two blacks among the 125 employees at BOEC. There are nine others who qualify as minorities. If the pattern holds, many of these can be expected to leave.

Mayor Clark told me during a break in Thursday's hearing that my "personnel actions" had prompted him to pull the bureau that day.

If he denies there is a racial motivation behind his action, he is basing that denial on his ignorance of what is going on under his nose, in his own office.

## Black Businesses Must Support Each Other, National Black Chamber President Urges At Annual Conference



Oscar J. Coffey, right, President and CEO of the National Black Chamber of Commerce, thanks participants recently in the Chamber's 5th National Conference in Fort Worth, Texas. With Coffey are, from left: Devoyd Jennings, Chairman, Fort Worth Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce; Norma Ruby, President, Classic Concessions, Inc. and President, Fort Worth Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce; Allene Roberts, Manager, Public Programs, Philip Morris Companies Inc. and Benjamin Ruffin, Vice President, Corporate Affairs, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company. Roberts and Ruffin were keynote speakers for the three day meeting. Coffey urged the meeting of business persons to support the development and growth of Black businesses nationwide.

Black businesses must patronize other Black-owned businesses if African Americans hope to develop and expand their economic power, Oscar Coffey, President and CEO, National Black Chamber of Commerce (NBCC), told a group of more than 300 delegates who attended the Chamber's 5th Annual Conference here recently.

"Silver Rights -- Our Emancipation" was the theme of the convention, and for three days the delegates -- representing some 73 Black chambers of commerce representing 15,000 members nationwide -- participated in a variety of workshops and discussions on topics ranging from doing business with Africa to the problems Black businesses face in attempting to get loans from banks.

Coffey, who said this year's conference was the Chamber's most successful yet, was exhilarated by the depth of interest in, and discussion about, the convention's theme.

"This represents a tremendous coming together for Black businesses," said Coffey. "Many of us are realizing that we've got to go back to square one, and share the responsibility of supporting

and patronizing our fellow Black businesses."

Coffey said that before the advent of integration, numerous African American businesses provided much of the goods and services Blacks used, and that Black communities were often the base for largely self-contained and successful Black businesses. "We need more and more strong Black-owned businesses today, and we must support them. We all have a responsibility to share with each other," said Coffey.

Allene Roberts, Manager, Public Programs, Philip Morris Companies, Inc., delivered the convention's opening keynote address.

She said: "Although Philip Morris is today the world's largest manufacturer of packaged consumer goods, we remember what it's like to be a small and struggling business. Almost all of our operating companies were started by individual entrepreneurs -- people with a dream -- just like many of you here.

"Philip Morris, for example, was an actual person who ran a small tobacco store. Miller Brewing was started

by Frederick Miller, a German immigrant. Kraft, Birds Eye, Oscar Mayer, and Post all began as small companies founded by individuals who had those names. These individuals achieved the American dream through inspiration, talent and old-fashioned hard work, but they also achieved it because they had the opportunity.

"Today we must ensure that minority business owners have a similar opportunity. We must do everything we can to encourage the future Birdseys, Millers, and Krafts," concluded Roberts.

The National Black Chamber of Commerce was organized in 1983 to promote the growth and development of Black-owned businesses nationwide and also to support statewide Black chambers of commerce.

The conference was sponsored by Philip Morris Companies, Inc., Philip Morris Companies, U.S.A., R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, American Airlines, Draft General Foods, Coors Brewing Company, Black Travel & News, Miller Brewing Company and the Fort Worth Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce.

## The Portland Observer

(USPS 959-680)  
OREGON'S OLDEST AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLICATION  
Established in 1970

### Contributing Writers

McKinley Burt  
Dan Bell  
Mattie Ann Callier-Spears  
Bill Council  
John Phillips

**Publisher**  
Alfred Henderson  
**Operations Manager**  
Joyce Washington  
**Accounting Manager**  
Gary Ann Garnett  
**Public Relations**  
Chuck Washington  
**Sales & Promotions**  
Tony Washington

### Production Staff

Dean Babb  
Gary Ann Garnett  
Rea Washington

The PORTLAND OBSERVER is published weekly by Exie Publishing Company, Inc. 4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. Portland, Oregon 97211 503-288-0033 • Fax 288-0015



Deadline for all submitted materials:

Articles: Monday, 5:00 pm--Ads: Tuesday, noon

POSTMASTER: Send Address Changes to: Portland Observer, P.O. Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208. Second class postage paid at Portland Oregon.

The Portland Observer welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts and photographs should be clearly labeled and will be returned if accompanied by a self addressed envelope. All created design display ads become the sole property of the newspaper and can not be used in other publications or personal usage, without the written consent of the general manager, unless the client has purchased the composition of such ad. © 1991 THE PORTLAND OBSERVER. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED.

Subscriptions: \$25.00 per year.

The Portland Observer--Oregon's Oldest African-American Publication--is a member of the National Newspaper Association--Founded in 1885, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc., New York, NY.

## SUBSCRIBE

The Portland Observer

THE PORTLAND OBSERVER  
CAN BE SENT DIRECTLY TO  
YOUR HOME ONLY \$30.00  
PER YEAR.

PLEASE FILL OUT,  
ENCLOSE CHECK OR  
MONEY ORDER,  
AND MAIL TO:

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

THE PORTLAND OBSERVER  
PO Box 3137  
PORTLAND, OREGON 97208

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State \_\_\_\_\_

zip code \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU FOR READING  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER