

This Way for Black Empowerment

by Dr. Lenora Fulani

That Which the Black Community Hath Joined Together, Let No One Put Asunder...

The Reverend Al Sharpton recently wrote me an "open letter; which I would like to share with you. "In the course of political season, distortions and outright lies become more the rule than the exception," he explains. "Much has been said during this season of my relationship to you and NAP. I thought I'd write this open letter to you to give clarity."

Reverend Sharpton felt called upon to write, this unusual letter in response to an intense campaign by the media in New York City to drive a wedge between us. Why do the powers-that-be want to bread us up? Because together Al Sharpton, and I, each in our own ways, are reaching out to the black and Latino poor- and one-third of the city's population which doesn't vote - and giving them a reason to participate in the political process. And those who rule New York (and America) are scared stiff.

Even more dangerous, from their point of view, is the fact that I am forging a link between Reverend Sharpton, a black nationalist with deep roots in the working class black community, and leaders for the independent political movement who emerged as major players in the very extraordinary "political season" we have just come through.

"I've come to know you, Dr. Fulani, through the years as a clear, eloquent, sincere and courageous Black woman. You have the respect and admiration of many in our community and you've earned it. No question, you're an im-

portant political leader in our community. Though you and I don't always agree or choose the same route all the time, I cherish our relationship and will not be intimidated into changing it. We must fight in whatever styles or methods we choose, but the goal must be true independent empowerment of our people. I thank you for your consistent support. It helped make history this year, now we must continue the struggle." Reverend Sharpton concluded. "Mass media and rumors didn't put us together - we must not let them tear us apart."

From the first moment that Reverend Sharpton and I met, more than ten years ago, our relationship was based on a very deep commitment to the Black community. We marched together when there were only two people behind - us because the struggle called for us to march. Later, when there were two thousand people behind us, we continued to march because the struggle still called for us to march.

In 1988 I led 300 women of color through the street of Pughkeeps in upstate New York to support Tawana Brawley and her advisor, Reverend Sharpton and attorney Alton Maddox. Together Rev and I marched in Bensonhurst for Yusuf Hawkins, in Los Angeles for Rodney King, and Teaneck, New Jersey for Phillip Pannell, Jr.

Reverend Sharpton came to New Hampshire in February of this year during the primary to join me in-

forming the national press that Bill Clinton would not be welcome in New York's black community. Our statement was always that wherever the Black community needed us to be - we would be there.

As our respective strength and renown have grown, so too have the attacks on us, individually and together. During the course of his run for the U.S. Senate in the Democratic Party primary, and my independent run for the presidency, reporters of every political stripe - white, Black, Puerto Rican - went out of their way to foment divisions between us. Reverend Sharpton was urged to denounce me as the brainwashed puppet of a white guru. I urged to repudiate him for having sold out the Black Agenda.

Neither of us fell for it. Indeed, while we have always acknowledged and respected that we have different tactics and strategies, our coalition has only been strengthened by the efforts to undermine it.

It is well known in our community that the powers-that-be want to destroy alliances among independent Black leaders. The still-pending indictment against Reverend Sharpton (masterminded by the Attorney General of New York State, Bob Abrams, who won the Democratic nomination for the Senate) and the FBI's ongoing disinformation campaign against me from the sinister backdrop against which the attempts to disrupt our relationship have taken place.

they will not recommend you--you're not a part of their click--you're bright and can't be used. Therefore, you can forget about making decent money in this town.

The African American community will never progress in this city. By the way, in regards to economic development where is the millions of dollars that have been earmarked for the community over the years? The community looks worse than it did before the so-called economic developers came through.

Yes, Portland born and raised blacks are different! They've sold out in order to further their own selfish needs, they are gate-keepers who joyously destroy optimism thus keep their thumbs on the African American community especially on us dignified and progressive African Americans who are sincere in wanting to make positive changes.

Recently, a well-known African American male visited Portland, He expressed to me his uneasiness about being here. His advice to me was "to get the hell out of Dodge." However, he commended me for being a sister on the ball but expressed his dismay over my

being displaced--"you're in the wrong city" he said. This well-known African American male went on to say that Portland would never be progressive for African Americans. The black oppressors have sold their souls; have sold out to get a small piece of the pie.

"You know who you are! You recycled few in high places."

This well-known African American male also stated that it was well known in other parts of the country that African American men in Portland love white women.

Well black oppressors, you devils, you will be pleased to know that you've gotten rid of another for real African American. I'm taking this for real brother's advice and getting the hell out. I can't wait to meet for real African Americans.

Black oppressors, may the misfortune you have placed on others return to you in full force during this lifetime.

Sincerely,
A True African American on her way out of Portland before she ends up becoming a black oppressor? No way! Black balled!

S. Harris, North Portland

perspectives

by Professor McKinley Burt

The Thrill Is Gone III

It seems I have brought some historians out of the woodwork and they are citing some rather interesting and progressive black, middle class role models of another generation. They are talking about those African Americans in inner northeast Portland who built large scale business and real estate complexes with funds accumulated by assessments on their salaries as red caps, pullman porters, dining car waiters and other jobs.

Unbelievably (to some), this admirable economic infrastructure was built during the years before, during and after World War II, housing families, business enterprises and recreational facilities. I became intimately familiar with this infrastructure and its prime movers when I began my public accounting practice immediately after the war (1945). At other times I have written in detail about this phenomenon, but I cite it here simply to put forth a documented model for comparison to today's black, middle class activity.

It is of great interest, of course, as to what happened to this success story of yesterday, and how is it relevant to the present. When I left Portland in the early 1950's to take on some major accounting clients in Los Angeles, all of the operations were alive and well. When I returned in the 1960's, the great "federal machine" called "Urban Renewal" (Negro Removal) had indeed removed the African American business complex; just as it had in scores of major cities across the nation.

Now, if you are wondering how this type of devastation of the economic future of an entire race could be permitted to happen without the most serious confrontation in the history of the races, then let me take you down to Los Angeles at the time I just mentioned. Keep in mind those "Major accounting clients" I mentioned were just that; an unprecedented (for a black) array of enterprises key to American infrastructure (at many size levels, including restaurants and groceries).

There was Standard Tool And Die, Capitol Steel, Tip Top Laundry and Dry Cleaning Chain, Kohler Hotel, Hartman Jewellery Chain, Stanley Lawrence Wholesalers and Discount House (sold clothing, jewellery, furniture, sporting equipment, silverware, appliances, automotive goods, etc.). Now, this last was a full-time job where I was the supervisor for "Inventory Control" meaning I was responsible for all fiscal aspects of the flow of all those tens of millions of dollars in merchandise from the time the firm took legal title until final sale or return. This type of accounting, of course, also had to do with physical processes of ordering, purchasing and storage. And included a "Catalog House" or mail order division.

The important consideration here is that this level and depth of economic experience for a black was not unique in that city at the particular time. My African American peer group was "on a roll" that began early on this 1950's decade with major favorable Civil Rights decisions both local and national. There was an almost unbelievable surge of social and economic activity among African Americans fueled by the release of a half-century of repressed emotion, ambition and ability.

Among my particular group (and several others); were those of us who saw an unprecedented opportunity to implement the successful economic models that had been first advanced by historic African American figures like Marcus Garvey, Madame Walker, Etc., and by the capable southern business builders who launched successful insurance and mercantile enterprises. "How could we fail", we thought, given both the new economic flux, and our new financial expertise such as I just described for my own case.

While there were some successes (which might seem quite significant to the reader) they were nothing at all compared to what could/should have been accomplished; not when you look back at what blacks in the south had

already accomplished by the turn of the century (who was it that said, "those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it?"). There was no chance at all of imposing a structured, well planned, economic development mode upon that maelstrom of unleashed drive and ambition that gripped the multitude.

To put it simply, almost everyone went their own way and those in our small core group of planners (dreamers?) who saw the possibility of a resurgence of past economic approaches built on the strength of cooperative, systematic techniques were doomed to disappointment. Not only did most blacks (understandably) focus in on their own individual version of "upward mobility" and investment opportunities, but several other now familiar forces came into play--as usual "the man" moved in as the establishment decided there was no way this innovative, talented mass was going to be allowed to "escape the plantation. Why, with their abilities and given a cohesive group ethic they would soon outdistance the whites."

Last week, I introduced the concept of the "Black Market Men", the African American professional "head hunters" who sold their services to the liquor, tobacco and automobile companies on the basis that they could deliver to them most of the brightest and ablest young black college graduates as their super salesman. a group that did just that, not only in Los Angeles, but in innercities across the nation, increasing the sales of liquor and tobacco in the ghettos at a level never dreamed of in white areas. They were given cars, bonuses and trips to Vegas and the Bahamas. Engineers became hucksters. These were the "troops" that my peer group thought we would have available for the "new look" in black economic development, but with the federal government also guarding the plantation, it was not to be. More next week for the techniques are still employed, including Portland.

The Black Vote Counts In '92

BY JOHN E. JACOB
President and Chief Executive Officer
National Urban League

Even though African Americans have been largely ignored in the current political campaigns, they hold the key to the election to the next president of the United States.

As the race tightens, African Americans are mobilizing our communities to vote in record numbers, and we are likely to be a key factor in all the elections--presidential, senate, house, and local. The candidate who wins the black vote will go to the White House.

I expect that African Americans will be at the table next January when the president frames national economic policies. Of course we want policies that put people back to work, feed the hungry, house the homeless, and nominate the judges who enforce the civil rights laws.

The black vote will also be decisive if we do not use it. A low black voter turnout will mean that the next president owes us nothing. Both parties may write us off.

So African Americans have a choice in this election that goes beyond which candidate to support. We can decide whether we want a voice or whether we want to be voiceless.

Low black voter turnout is driven by cynicism and a doubt about whether we can make a difference. But not

voting only gives politicians and excuse to ignore the non-voting poor.

Abstaining from the vote because we may prefer someone who is not running, does not work in our interest.

We may not like the way the three presidential candidates pander to the concerns of suburbia while ignoring the inner city. But realism requires us to base our judgments on the candidates' views on the economy and reviving our inner cities, rather than on their campaign strategies.

The size of the African American vote really counts. Politicians are counters. A record African American voter turnout will focus their attention on our concerns.

So every additional black vote gives us political credit to draw on and makes the black agenda more central to the next Administration.

What is our agenda?

Item One--is the National Urban League's Marshall Plan for America, which targets investments of \$50 billion dollars a year on job-creating infrastructure and on training and education our people.

Our competitors do much more. Germany is planning to invest a trillion dollars over ten years to build up eastern Germany's economy. Japan will spend \$100 billion to prepare a 21st century infrastructure. Even Taiwan earmarked over \$80 billion of infra-

structure investments to become an economic powerhouse.

Item Two--is to promote social policies that give people greater opportunities. Health care is critical--our communities do not have the clinics and the medical care we need, and too few of us have health insurance. Housing is also critical and the welfare system needs reform.

Item Three--we need judges that protect our rights. The next president may appoint as many as four new Supreme Court judges, along with dozens of other federal judges. This election will decide whether we get a Court that erodes or safeguards our rights.

Item Four--is empowerment for African Americans. If African Americans are to emerge from the shadows to the mainstream of national life, we must participate in the decision that affect our lives. That requires the political clout to be heard at all levels of government. And we will be heard if we vote.

African Americans have been moving backwards. We can begin moving forward by voting in this election. We can make a difference and we can use our influence to make critical changes. People who vote have power. It is the most positive way to channel the resentments that led to the Los Angeles riots, and to launch a platform of real change.

Portland Observer encourages our readers to write letters

Elementary And Middle School Students Elect President In Mock U.S. Vote

Who will claim the Oval Office on November 3d? Students across Oregon and Western Washington may have the premonitory answer. More than 5,000 elementary and middle school students recently took part in a mock vote, electing Governor Bill Clinton. Clinton grabbed 52% of the votes, while incumbent George Bush received 37% and challenger Ross Perot registered 11%. Other election results included Bob Packwood receiving 68% of the votes to defeat Les AuCoin in the U.S. Senatorial race.

Students participated in the mock

election as part of the Voter Education Program sponsored by local McDonald's restaurants and television station KPTV-12. Most classes participating in the program geared up for the vote with discussions about the candidates and the election process using the provided Voter Education program teaching guide as a resource. Some schools took the mock election a step further, offering the students "voter registration" and bringing in official booths for the polling process. The amount of high level discussion which has resulted from the program has been amaz-

ing," said Gail Rupp, sixth grade teacher at Athey Creek Middle School. Rupp is served as the school's Voting Day Chair. "We made the program cross-discipline with most of the discussions taking place in the social studies and language arts classes. The math department is in charge of counting the votes, with their classes and it will probably take a few days. Everyone's really excited."

Athey Creek students, along with others across the region, made their voices heard this week. Time will tell if adults in the region agree.

Letter To The Editor

Re: Article 10/28/92 By James Posey

Are Portland Blacks Different? Hats off to you Mr. Posey for having the courage to bring this issue to the forefront. However, the title of your article was too soft. It should have been, "Black Upon Black Oppression--Portland's Blatant Black Racism!"

Those of us who have spoken out against these black oppressors have been ridiculed, marked and ousted by them (you gave some good examples). Why? Because they do not want the world to know their devil nature!

Black devils are worse than white devils. These black oppressors are also to blame for the high unemployment rate among African Americans in Portland. Black oppressors are considered by the "white powers that be" as a good personal reference for black job applicants (whether you list them or not). Regardless of your qualifications some employers (particularly the state and local government) will not hire you unless you have been Okayed by the black oppressors. Even if the black oppressors know nothing about you,

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