

# perspectives

by Professor McKinley Burt

## Education Update '92, II

You know, so much has happened since my last in-depth session with you readers, it will take several "meetings" to get abreast of the current scene. That is quite alright, for the contemporary education stage is much the same as last year; but because it is well lit, we are able to see that the same actors are present in the perennial play.

So that we remain "informed" by these discourses and not just simply "taken for a ride" by the rush of verbiage and rhetoric in this drama--be sure to examine carefully all the play-acting and stagecraft reviewed. Even better, let me cite a valuable book that could usefully accompany your readings (entertainment?) in a number of fields, "Double-Speak," by William Lutz 1989; From "Revenue Enhancement" (new taxes) to "Terminal Living," How government, business, advertisers, and others use language to deceive you. Also try politics-education.

I'll bet you won't go 20 pages before you angrily snatch up the last newspaper or magazine you read--or, perhaps, the most recent education journal. Order a paperback copy from your favorite bookseller. The publisher is "Harper Perennial," a division of Harper Collins Publishers. At this writing, the possibility of a teacher's strike is a distinct possibility. There is mounting concern that frustrated teachers, bargaining with strapped districts unwilling to settle early or for more than one or two-year contracts, may walk and bring a disintegrating educational process to a grinding halt. "Measure 5" is said to bear the blame for difficult and drawn-out negotiations. Many of the larger districts received no increases in funding for the 1992-93 year due to the state's new equity school funding formula. The change in process saw a legislature which could not provide enough state dollars to bring "all" districts up to the highest standards.

All parents are uneasy as well they should be--and certainly black parents

have additional fears as they anticipate a possible axe for several badly needed special programs. Among the several very important district programs, there is one in particular we hope will not only have its structure maintained but in fact be enhanced. This is the "Alcohol and Drug Program," based at Cleveland High School and coordinated by Ms. Claudia McDuffie (formerly of "Integration Services" at the same school). This very crucial support concept will be more fully developed here next week as space allows. Nothing can be as important to the learning process as having the student present and ready, willing and able to learn. Much of the susceptibility to gang recruitment and other vulnerability or destructive behavior is the pathology that the "Alcohol and Drug Program" will address. There are, of course, disabilities other than drugs and alcohol that increase the "dropout" rate.

All parents (and certainly this writer) will be quite pleased to note that the "Multicultural/Multiethnic Education Task Force is being revised; Herman Washington chairs the committee and Carolyn Leonard is coordinator. As many of the readers know, I have a long record of interest and contribution to this project; not only in Portland and throughout the state (Through Dept. of Agriculture), but nationally. I will have a special report soon on my new technology books and videos on black scientists--backed by industry. They were needed to pursue copyrights in Europe, China, Japan and Africa. An international specialist formerly with NIKE is helping.

### The Oregon Report Card: 1992-93 some highlights:

- Enrollment is expected to continue its record growth the rest of the decade, hitting 535,000 this year and climbing about 10,000 annually. The increase is fueled by a baby boomlet which began in the late 1970s. While enrollment climbed 2.9 percent in 1991-92, minority enrollment increased by

6.2 percent and Hispanics by '2.5 percent.

- Because of Measure 5, the state will carry most of the burden of school funding beginning next school year. By the time the property tax limitation is fully implemented in 1996, the state will be providing over two-thirds of all school funding.

- Although Oregon's student population grew by 2.9 percent, staff increased by only 2.4 percent, building administrators decreased by 2 percent and central administration decreased by 7.1 percent.

- The number of school districts, currently 295, will fall below 180 by the 1996-97 school year because of a law requiring districts to unify if they do not offer K-12 programs. Oregon teachers average about 10 years at their current site and 14 years experience overall. Their average age 43; their average salary is \$33,913, a 5.2 percent increase over last year.

- Oregon's low-income student population, as measured by the number of children eligible for free or reduced-rate lunches, is 19 percent of the total school population.

- Home schooling has seen a steady increase since it became legal under Oregon law in school year 1985-86.

- Since then, the number of students registered for home schooling has more than doubled, increasing from 2,671 to 5,544 in 1990-91.

- Roughly 10.5 percent of Oregon's school age students receive special education services.

- The new Oregon Pre-kindergarten program takes a preventive approach combining social and health services with education. Over 2,200 preschoolers will be served in 1992. The program, combined with federal Head Start, will reach only 36 percent of Oregon's 16,261 eligible three- and four-year olds.

- Almost 42 percent of all high school juniors and seniors were enrolled in professional-technical education programs.

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We applaud the Governors' Office and encourage other minority businesses to contact Faye Burch at (503) 378-5651 if they need help or an advocate for minority or woman owned businesses.

Sincerely,  
Herman Grimes  
Vice President  
Government Contract  
Coast Industries, Inc.

## What a Difference An X Makes.

BY JAMES L. POSEY

There is no question that as a result of the Malcolm X controversy, the people of Portland have gained clearer insights into the Black existence in Portland. The next question is, "Have Blacks themselves gained enough insights into their own existence to make them change course?" My initial response is, I - don't - think - so. If Malcolm was anything, he was a risk taker, which allowed him to grow and evolve, and some might even say, he became self-actualized. In other words, he found himself.

Throughout most of this controversy, some of us were stressing the long-term economic implications of the issues with Act III. For example, Act III and the entire Lloyd Center complex is sorely negligent in including employment and business representation of African-Americans in their operations. Why not push for at least one African-American concessionaire and independent retail store in the complex? And what about maintenance and service contracts with African-American businesses? The point is, let's break the long term cycle of African-Americans roaming the Lloyd Center complex just spending and consuming. This is an opportunity to establish the basis for including African-American retail enterprises in the complex.

While some of the promoters of the boycott picked up on this and eventually broaden the issue beyond just some Blacks being able to view a movie closer to their neighborhood, it was clear that others were uncomfortable when forced to consider the broader economic issue. The Coalition of Black Men should have been especially receptive to this idea. For while they were pushing to get Blacks hired on the Oregon Convention Center project, the Lloyd Center conducted a massive multimillion dollar remodeling project using few Black workers and virtually no Black contractors.

The point is that every effort must be made to turn this issue and issues like this into some real economic gains for the African-American community. We must be aware that as long as some of our so-called Black leaders are finan-

cially controlled and unduly influenced by the white power structure, this vision will be clouded. And in spite of rhetoric to the contrary, their lack of action on economic issues makes a mockery of Malcolm's life. If the leaders won't lead, than Blacks in Portland who know this to be the truth ought to themselves invoke the spirit of Malcolm and chart a course of self-sufficiency, self-reliance and self-respect. But, let's not confuse this with Black separatism, nationalism and all that. This is simply about common, practical sense -- taking care of African-American individuals, families and the community.

I only wish that Blacks who aspire to be our leaders and advocates could some how catch this vision and see the greater scheme of things. Blacks, and especially Black leaders, should examine themselves in light of Malcolm's life. They should ask themselves if they measure up. This is because Malcolm's life makes the point that we must be willing to go against our leaders when they are not willing to change and move forward in our best interest.

A good case in point, as far as I'm concerned, is the Portland Urban League, which could do less talking about it's historical role as a moderate facilitator. There ain't nothing moderate about what Black folks are going through these days. As one who has worked with the Urban League over the years, I think it's about time they do some changing. Their director talks about building bridges rather than walls. But he should take it from some of us in construction who know about building real bridges. There's a hell of a lot of foundation work that must be done first. For example, excavation of dirt and removing old walls in order to get on an even level footing. Only then can a strong lasting bridge be built. Surely the leadership at the League must know that there are many more racist walls that must come tumbling down before lasting bridges can be built.

Anyhow, the Black community should insist that the Urban League, the Coalition of Black Men and other so-called Black Leadership groups stop using the bandage approach and reacting to crisis after crisis. From my stand-

point, we are only treating the symptoms of a terrible condition that is just as devastating in economic terms as AIDS is in medical terms. The lack of economic capacity (not just jobs) is slowly eating at the heart of the African-American existence. And, if Black leaders and organizations are not willing to deal with this harsh reality, they ought get out of the way and unselfishly support those who can.

This whole notion was reaffirmed by the one consistent theme expressed by those who commented on the Malcolm X-Act III controversy. That is the awareness that African-Americans in this town lack the economic capacity to determine their own destiny. So, the question becomes how many more of these incidents like Act III will it take to get Blacks to change course? The National Urban League has set a course. They are promoting an economic development plan called the Marshall Plan, which calls for massive public works and other projects to get the economy moving. I'm sure most Black Portlanders know little about this plan. The local Urban League, like all other local Black organizations, ought to have a similar economic development plan.

We should all understand that this is not an Urban League problem or any other single Black organization's problem. Lord knows we don't want to get charged with blaming the League or other organizations for something for which we all must claim responsibility. We must accept the blame as a community for not setting priorities, not being self-sacrificing, and not coming together to meet the challenge of Black economic growth. One way to help change this situation is to support each other more. A good group to start working with is the Black Dollar Days Task Force. This group encourages Blacks to support Black-owned businesses. You can call Carnell Crum, the executive director, at (503) 284-0322 for more information.

The X does make a difference. We can use this incident to encourage all of us to do better.

James Posey is a local, small business owner with a background in social work and community activism.

## The Ultimate Stereotypes: Chrysler's Lee Iacocca "Welfare" Interview--N.Y. Cops Shoot Black Officer As A "Criminal"

BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT

First, let us examine last Wednesday's revealing, network interview of Mr. Iacocca, retiring chairman of the Chrysler Automotive Corporation. And in the second instance, just how much new insight is to be gained from an examination of an all too familiar phenomenon--white policemen immediately conclude that any black man with a drawn gun must necessarily be a criminal? Happens all the time, twenty-two shots will surely take care of the beast.

The Chairman of the Board of the mighty Chrysler Corp. waxed expansively and eloquently when given this opportunity to present his version of the American Dream. He began with poignant and soul-wrenching descriptions of poor, ignorant immigrant parents who with "nothing but their two hands" built a rewarding life in a "land of opportunity." It immediately occurred to me that immigrants are a "self-selected" group, people who deliberately choose to come to a new land whatever the perceived odds and difficulties. There is always a carefully calculated method in their madness--why else should they come?

I had just begun to register this prelude to a "Horatio Alger" motivational tale to end all such stories, when I thought, "Let's compare this wondrous recitation with the arrival of African Americans on these shores" (those who survived the Passage); naked, whipped, degraded, enslaved--stripped of language and even the dignity of conjugal and other family relations." Now, are we to be such fools as to conclude that Mr. Iacocca did not have in mind very pointed references to the descendants of those early black arrivals on these shores?

Even those who are not too swift were able to catch on when the chairman began to cut loose with all those

classic "buzz words" that the establishment substitutes for black Americans: "My parents did not go on WELFARE, Dad pulled himself up by his BOOT STRAPS". On and on, the great American epitome of success ("Universally available through hard work") proceeded to lace his interview with the Anglo Saxon code. I held my breath; at any moment I expected him to quote the famous inscription by Margaret Sanger which appears on the Statue Of Liberty in welcome of European immigrants: "Send me your poor and oppressed..."

Now, the reader may conclude that this interview was nothing less than a thinly-disguised racist diatribe and given that beauty (or ugliness) lies in the eye of the beholder, he would be right. But, this type of hypocritical denigration is a daily media event and, what I am afraid of is that we will continue to see Mr. Iacocca as an honored guest at banquets or conventions of our black leaders--or, worse yet, as one of the prime-movers from industry that president-elect Clinton proposes to put on his task force for the revitalization of the inner cities.

Of course, we have that other situation where a few very perceptive blacks are questioning Clinton's appointment of Vernon Jordan as head of the selection process that will determine the key appointments in the new administration. As C-Span detailed, not only does Mr. Jordan bring a "prestige and comfort to the black population as former head of the National Urban League"--but, as an attorney, he also represents the Phillip Morris Company through his Washington, D.C. law firm. This company is the largest pusher of tobacco in the "world," and both in the U.S. and Africa, the principal market target is black. In Africa, of course, there is no requirement for a warning to be stamped on the packs. Well, Well!

Returning to Mr. Iacocca and his

not-too-subtle semantic ties, I would make several pertinent remarks about the time period in which his immigrant parents arrived (around 1900). These are important considerations and need to be related to the reality of black experience and opportunity at that time or any other. I have written a number of times in my "Perspectives" column about the many racist barriers thrown up against the advancement (boot straps) of African-Americans, as compared with the golden opportunities provided newly-arrived, often illiterate white immigrants.

At the time the Chrysler chairman's parents arrived, Samuel Gompers, the famous union organizer, had just finished his organization of the A.F.L. craft unions. His greatest "triumph" was to have rewritten all of the union constitutions to specify that membership would be for "White Males Only." We do not have room to detail the economic harm done to blacks by this cruel and vicious act that was designed to pave the way for the hordes of European immigrants. Needless to say, thousands of black craftsmen lost their jobs, and their families, their "welfare."

In closing, let me point out another of these pivotal immigration situations. I would take my urban economics students downtown to the "Pitcock Block Building" and show them a huge color poster in the lobby. A historic icon from the late 19th century, it featured a farmland scene with beaming white farmers reaping a bountiful harvest in mid-America. This poster appeared in most seaport towns in Europe and invited anyone who could read it to come to America and, free of charge, receive land astride the Union Pacific railroad, tools and a start-up grant. But the 9th and 10th Cavalry (Black Buffalo Soldiers), who defended them, never got theirs.

To The Editor:

We are writing to inform other minority owned businesses of the assistance available to them through the Office of the Governor.

We also want to commend the efforts of Faye Burch, advocate, Office of Minority/Women/Emerging Small Businesses, for invaluable and timely assistance to Coast Industries, Inc., a 35-year-old minority-owned business located in Portland.

Her office was instrumental in as-

sisting us during the procurement process which resulted in our gaining a contract in excess of \$300,000 per year for custodial services at Southern Oregon State College in June 1992. In addition, she recently acted quickly on our behalf in October, helping us resolve an alleged contract performance issue arising between S.O.S.C. and Coast Industries contract representatives.

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