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## The Black Middle Class of '93

BY JAMES L. POSEY

This week, the Blacks in Government organization will be doing its annual Martin Luther King event in Seattle, and the local Black Federal Executive Board members will have their "show 'n tell" event here in Portland. In Seattle, the big-name, keynote speaker will be Tony Brown. No doubt he will deliver a fiery speech challenging Blacks to get their act together and work together to gain economic prosperity by pooling the resources of the Black community. State Treasurer Jim Hill will be the keynote speaker at the Federal Executive Board event and will more than likely sing the praises of opportunities for hard working Blacks in Oregon. As sincere as these efforts are, somehow the speeches and programs never seem to bring about any changes or action for Blacks to do more for themselves. And unless something happens to alter the course, nothing will happen in 1993 to change the feeble results of the last several years. Why is this?

These two organizations and events epitomize a puzzlingly lethargic condition on the part of those who have benefitted the most from the legacy of Dr. King and the many others who died in the civil rights movement. I am referring to the Black middle class, who just don't seem to get it. Every year about this time, we have to endure them in this outrageous hypocrisy. But where in the hell are these Blacks the rest of the year? They are the best educated and the most economically stable and politically astute: the more socially acceptable people from the Black community. So where are they when you need them?

There is a regressive tendency by the Black middle class to be less involved in the struggles of the general Black community the higher they climb the socioeconomic ladder. They

are the African-Americans who could contribute the most and actually contribute the least. What's up with this? But, maybe this is an unfair charge. Perhaps these Blacks are quietly working behind the scenes to improve the condition of their less fortunate brothers and sisters while benefiting their own conditions. NOT!

During this time for remembering Dr. King and reviewing Black history, one can't help but feel that all problems in the Black community would be solved if Black progress was based on the number of conferences, ceremonies, commemorations, and celebrations in which Blacks seems to indulge. But the truth is that after years of these events, little has changed. In fact, conditions have gotten progressively worse. And the reasons for this. One explanation might be that, in general, these seemingly more prosperous Blacks, in spite of all their talk about Dr. Martin L. King and other civil rights events, are unable to realize and appreciate the source of their tenuous positions. Unfortunately many middle-class Blacks are confused about who brought them to the dance. So they don't believe that they need to leave the dance with the ones who brought them there.

It appears that as Blacks become more upwardly mobile, they selectively move away from Black things. They move to Beaverton and buy an "X" cap to wear when they visit the Black community. The most disturbing aspect is the tendency for some middle-class Blacks, especially those in key positions, to "hide out." Apparently, their objective is to call as little attention as possible to their blackness, collect a good pay check, and live as if other Blacks don't exist. Any aggressive association with Black causes might endanger their prospects for career and social acceptance.

Many of these African-Americans work for large companies, state

and county government agencies, commercial banks, and social and health services organizations throughout the Portland area. They are in the best positions to work for Black empowerment. The irony is these are the very people who could turn the tide and begin to change the negative dynamics for other Blacks. They are the ones who have the greatest ability to move the Black community toward Black economic independence. For example, most of these Blacks keep their money in credit unions or banks, institutions that have put little or no reinvestment back into the Black community. Collectively, these Blacks make enough money to establish a Black credit union or effectively influence the direction of the only Black-operated bank in the state. These Black-owned institutions could then more effectively work for economic development in the Black community.

Additionally, the Black middle class has the ability to effect employment policies within their organizations. For example, every year about this time, federal agencies make plans for student internships. Needless to say, typically few of these internships include Black youth. Across the federal hiring spectrum, there is virtually an army of students getting a head start. But Black youth won't be substantially included unless Blacks who work in government, and not just those in personnel, advocate for more Black interns. The concept could be carried out with many public and private sector employers. This would do much to avert the concerns about idle minority youth facing the prospect of another turbulent summer.

These are just a few of the actions middle-class Blacks could take to advance the Black cause in 1993.

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

## Kaplan Introduces New SAT Course Free Diagnostic Tests And Informational Seminars Available To High School Students and Parents

For thousands of anxiety-ridden high school students planning to take the SAT in 1993, there is good news: Kaplan Educational Center, the nation's leading test preparation company, has introduced a new course designed to make both the most ambitious and apathetic of students alike into test-taking gurus.

The course, called "Challenge," provides a highly structured training program which integrates the exam curriculum with personal guidance and frequent practice tests. The course is based on a cyclical-learning program consisting of eight lessons and four practice tests which are computer-

analyzed to identify students' individual strengths and weaknesses. Students also use comprehensive home study books which complement the classroom instruction.

Students who will take the SAT can try a free diagnostic test at the Portland Kaplan center, to see how they would perform on the actual exam. In addition, there will be a free informational seminar on Sunday, February 7th, 1 P.M.; The Galleria, 4th floor, Room 402. The seminar will cover SAT exam information, preparation and test taking strategies. For reservations and information, call 1-800-KAP-TEST.

Kaplan is the largest test preparation organization in the country. With 150 centers and 600 satellite classroom locations in the U.S. and abroad, the company serves over 150,000 students annually for college and graduate admissions exams such as the SAT, ACT, GMAT, GRE, LSAT and MCAT; professional certification and licensing exams for medicine, nursing, dentistry and accounting; and specialized exams for international students and professionals. Kaplan is a wholly-owned subsidiary of The Washington Post Company, who also owns the Washington Post newspaper and Newsweek Magazine.

## Class Helps People Manage Diabetes

"Living Gracefully With Diabetes," a new class offered by St. Vincent Hospital and Medical Center, will be offered on Wednesdays.

Jan. 27 to Feb. 24, from 7 to 9 p.m. The class will meet at the hospital's Health and Lifestyle Center, 1885 NW 185th Ave in Aloha.

Topics will include interpreting and monitoring blood glucose results

and setting priorities to lower the risk of complications. Special attention will be given to everyday activities such as grocery shopping and meal planning. The instructor is a registered nurse diabetes specialist. Cost is \$72 and preregistration is required. For more information contact the Health and Lifestyle Center at 645-4864.

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**Gridlocked Legislature May Not Solve Budget:** A Republican dominated House and a theoretically Democratic Senate seem headed for stalemate over Oregon's budget problems in the wake of Measure 5. In spite of calls from Governor in the wake of Measure 5. In spite of calls from Governor Roberts and Speaker Larry Campbell for cooperation and non-partisanship, the lawmakers may face deadlock through much of the session since Democrats seem amenable to tax increases that will have to originate in the Republican-dominated House.

Measure 5, the 1990 property tax limitation, will cause an anticipated shortfall of \$1.2 billion by 1995 and as much as \$3.7 billion by 1997. Roberts proposed cuts of \$900 million in programs might be able to balance the general fund while her two suggested tax packages are intended to restore the cuts and fund new programs.

Campbell and the House must originate revenue measures and with his commitment to downsize government indicates little progress in the coming session.

**Appeal Your Assessments:** You have a better than 50% chance of reducing your tax assessment according to the Oregon Department of Revenue. Out of nearly forty thousand appeals in '91-'92 about 60% won some reduction in the size of their tax bills. Multnomah county alone had 59% of its appeals result in lower assessments. So if you're homeowner and your assessment seems high, appeal. Your odds of reduction are better than half.

**New School Violence:** The stabbing of a Madison High School student broke a "five or six years" period of non-weapon use January 11. The wound was superficial but police are seeking the other 19 year old student who committed the assault. The cause of the attack has not been determined, partly due to linguistic problems. Students discovered with weapons are subject to expulsion or transfer and a second offense can result in immediate discipline although Vice-principal Ron Hudson said that "it has been five or six years since we had anybody test us."

Thu Chi Vo, turned himself in Tuesday for the stabbing of Lam That Ton, who was cut in the back of the head and had two stitches to close the half-inch wound. The cause of the fight leading to the incident was still unknown since the argument was in Vietnamese. Vo will very likely be expelled according to Vice-principal Hudson, if the facts are what they seem to be after the official hearing.

**World Famous Pianist At Jefferson High:** Andre Watts, popular classical concert artist, visited Jefferson High School last Monday (11 Jan) and talked to students about the rigors of a professional musician on the road. Since Watts performs around one hundred concerts a year with only occasional two week vacations, his advice to other aspiring musicians was based on actual knowledge.

The pianist, known to audiences in Italy, Germany, Spain, Switzerland and England, as well as most of the major cities of the United States, pointed out that although "practicing is a drag" it was what prepared a musician for his opportunities. Travel planning, time management, finding suitable food and all-night laundries and rehearsing all deep travel from being much fun, the musician added.

**Cocaine Dealer Sought by Police:** "Preacher", the alias for James Ray Yoakum, who also uses the names Peter Lee Brown and Lonnie Ford, is wanted by Portland police on charges of second degree assault, second degree kidnapping and compelling prostitution. Suspected of dealing cocaine in kilos as well, Yoakum is considered armed and has a reputation for being a very dangerous person. He

# THE WEEK IN REVIEW

is six feet tall, weighs 175, has black hair, brown eyes and a scar above his right eye. Although his last known address is Beaverton. Yoakum is thought to be a hidden owner of Gabi's Lounge and Restaurant at 5700 N.E. Martin Luther King Blvd. Call 823-HELP if you know this man's whereabouts. Your identity and information will remain confidential. A reward of up to \$1,000 is offered by the Crime-stoppers program for information leading to an arrest in this case.

**Library, Jail Levies Come To May Vote:** After last week's rejection of a four percent utility tax last week, Multnomah county commissioners agreed informally to put \$106.5 million worth of tax measures on the ballot for May 18 to keep libraries and jails open for the next three years and to remodel the decaying Central Library. The additional 6% over the expiring levies is seen as equal to the increased assessed value of property in the county. It is hoped that it will not raise tax rates above the \$10 per \$1,000 mandated by Measure 5.

The commissioners plan to have a campaign committee explain and sell the idea to the voters.

**More Money For Less Water?:** Yes, a rate increase will be proposed by the Water Bureau as part of its budget this spring. No, it is not because of last summer's drought. Inflation and conservation proposals will drive up rates according to Mike Rosenberger, Water Bureau administrator. Another possibility is seasonal increases and there is discussion as to whether this would be triggered by a shortage or just be automatic. The Water Bureau is also contemplating a change in billing procedures from quarterly to monthly and ease the confusion caused by the fact that sewer charges are included.

**Twenty Year Plan: Opinions Wanted:** Last Saturday, the first of several meetings to get the public involved in "visual preference surveys" was held in North Portland at the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center. There will be another meeting Jan. 27 at 7 p.m. at Providence medical Center amphitheater at 4605 N.E. Glisan St. Partners for a Livable Community is sponsoring the surveys to learn how Portland area residents want the region to grow with a half million new residents expected to move in over the next 20 years.

**Sickle Cell Treatment?:** Although much more research is needed, Doctors Susan P. Perrine and Douglas V. Faller have administered butyrate, a common food additive to three young people with sickle cell anemia and three with thalassemia. The additive, used as a flavor enhancer has no effect when eaten but injected into the bloodstream, activates a gene that normally shuts down before birth. This gene makes a fetal form of hemoglobin. Activated later in life, it replaces adult hemoglobin which is defective in both diseases.

"The results are very exciting and dramatic. In every case, the patients treated for even this short period of time, (two to three weeks) achieved levels of fetal hemoglobin that would be predicted to completely alleviate their disease," said Dr. Faller of Boston University Medical School.

The injectable form is now made only in small doses by Dr. Perrine of Children's Hospital in Oakland, Calif.

Larger doses are unavailable because drug companies do not feel there would be adequate profit in taking over production of the medicine. "It is purely economics. It's not racism," Faller commented.

Sickle cell anemia attacks 50 to 100 thousand black Americans. Butyrate may perhaps provide the first safe and simple treatment for the hereditary disease characterized by acute abdominal pains and ulcerations on the legs.

**Cascade Business Center Closing:** Continuing financial problems are forcing Cascade Business Center Corporation to close after a unanimous vote by the board of the nonprofit corporation last Tuesday according to Thomas Briggs, board president.

Tenants have been told to be moved by mid-march from the 38,000 square foot complex at 4131 N. Vancouver Ave. Two center employees and six incubator businesses will be among those displaced.

Peachtree Recycled Paper plans to find another space according to Cheryl Welch, owner. Her business started three years ago and now has six employees. Although moving will be expensive, she believes the business will survive. The departure of Tektronix, the center's major tenant was the final blow since it took about 40% of the center's annual budget of \$210,635 and created a serious need for new tenants.

"We weren't able to get replacements for the partners that left," Briggs commented, "I feel that it has been a success. He pointed out that the primary aim of the center was to provide a training ground for businesses operated by women and members of ethnic minorities.

**Little Shavers In Space:** Eight Shaver Elementary School students got a call from E.T. last Friday. Well, not E.T. but Endeavor, the U.S. space shuttle as it circled the earth with Portlander Susan Helms. How toys behave in space was the subject. For eight minutes the students spoke via telephone with the astronaut., Windup toys, nerf basketballs, the free-fall movement of the astronauts all added to scientific understanding and a memorable experience for the youngsters involved.

**Got Your Ticket:** Three and a quarter million dollars are waiting for some lucky person in tonight's Megabuck's drawing as the prize grew because no one won last Saturday. That means an income of about \$162,500 for the next 20 years minus taxes, of course. Don't blame the Portland Observer if you don't win. After all, the money does go for education and you may have learned a lesson.