

# perspectives

## A Recap Of Black History Month For 1993

Not too shabby! And Portland newspapers, black and white, did a better job than they have ever done. I am especially proud of the key presentations of the "Portland Observer", the staff out did itself with its coverage of major African American contributions in the arts, sciences, humanities, government, education, and the military.

In the Feb. 10 edition I wrote an article, "Is Black History Month All It Should Be?" And in a key paragraph I made the statement, "Africans and African Americans have not been exclusive about suffering, marching, and being lynched or assassinated," obviously, that was a deliberate dig at the number of local "accommodation" blacks who write or make presentations only upon those of us who "suffered" or were made martyrs. Readers have variously suggested that these celebrants are either "frightened of the man", doubtful of our own docu-



by Professor McKinley Burt

mented history, or just attuned to the quick, easy and popular.

Where such is the case, it is very regrettable for never in our history here "in the wilds of North America" has there been such a need to inspire and motivate our troubled youth with citations of our many magnificent contributions in science, mathematics, inventions and technology. In the same context, it is equally regrettable that there should be omitted the documented accounts of early black role models, men and women, in the creation of large, nationwide business.

It is interesting that two local high school teachers have called this past week to state that for the first time in many a year they had not heard of my making any presentations in the schools or appearing on any of the community television shows "though allegedly they are run by blacks". Both teach at schools with a considerable

black student body and one sent me a photocopy of the request she had put in for my appearance without result.

Contrary to one teacher's suggestion I am not about to embark on a possible path to paranoia, speculating on who-is-up-to-what, and if there is some "blocking" going on by those little groups who occasionally get the idea that they are the ones who are the only proper determinants of who and what is good for Portland's African American community. I was engaged by several white organizations to make presentations, including a federal agency; also by an outlying school with a 99% white student body.

Before "seeking dark shadows on the wall", I will first try an intense marketing and public relation program to see if that will remedy the situation. In respect to increasing the dissemination and documentation of black history in technology and science, I mentioned several months ago that after thirty years I had rejoined "Associated Oregon Industries". This is

Oregon's largest organization of the state's industry, large and small,

from phone companies and steel mills to Nike and Tektronix or three to four employee corner firms. I may no longer be the only black, Coast Industries may be in.

An interesting chain of events led to this opportunity to further develop my delivery system for disseminating the history of blacks in science and technology (My research and documentations are now the largest in the nation and this time I have major publishers for this fall and winter including overseas). What has happened is that during one meeting of Portland's "Water Quality Committee" of which I am a member, I encountered among the public in attendance two gentlemen who were curious about the name plate before my place on the rostrum.

They wanted to know if I was the same "McKinley Burt" who had been the accountant for their father's car dealership on Union Avenue back in 1950, and who had set up the "Union Avenue Finance Company" for a group of the used car dealers? Since I surely was the very same, there was no end to the excitement and after the meeting

we went out to the family home in Gresham—the old man was still living. We reminisced until the wee hours and even the fascinated great-grand kids stayed up. I spent the night, not yet realizing the impact of this chain of events.

To make along story short, during the next six weeks I was booked as keynote speaker at two Lion Clubs and a school assembly. And what usual fascinating subject did I talk about—"Black inventors and scientists" and how "you businessmen and educators" can help me in developing my program for motivating and training minority youth in technology. By this past January, I had been referred to a good dozen firms and organizations, most of whom were members of the "Associated Oregon Industries".

The management at one firm, dedicated workers in the Democratic Party, had staff put together a package of my references and citations in my chosen field—from the 1966 "Dalles Oregon Science & Communications Prize Winning Program" to last year's "Forest Service Diversity Program"—and sent the material

to President Clinton's Science and Education advisors.

I did wish to remark further, in that context "Is Black History Month All It Can Be?", I meant exactly what I said last week in "Perspectives". There is no doubt what soever in my mind that many, many African Americans would have a tremendous uplifting of spirit and much better self-image if they were aware that their forefathers fought valiantly and massively against the American Slavers during the Colonial Period. Are we to be the only people on God's earth that alleged "historians" are permitted to defame and degrade as meek, turn-the-other-cheek chattel slaves who never had the guts to revolt?

Be certain to get a copy of Peter Fryer's book, with its massive notes and impressive documentation, "Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain", Humanities Press, 1984. The Looking Glass Bookstore can obtain it for you very quickly. They are at 318 SW Taylor, 227-4760 (and of course Daltons, Etc.).

## ALONG THE COLOR LINE: Multicultural Economics: Minority Consumers And White Corporate America

In the year 2000, fully one-third of America's total population will consist of people of color—Latinos, Asian-Americans, Pacific Americans, American Indians, and African Americans. The fastest growing groups in this country are people of color. However, many of the leaders of America's largest corporations still frequently perceive African-Americans and other minorities as marginal to the economic development of the country. Racial and ethnic stereotypes about people of color still influence corporate marketing behavior.

The first stereotype is the attitude that the vast majority of black and Latino households are poor or low income, and that they have relatively few resources compared to families in the white suburbs. While its true that one-third of all African-Americans live below the poverty level, about one out of seven black households in 1990

had gross annual incomes above \$50,000. Second, the average black households spends about \$19,130 annually on consumer times, about 35 percent less than the \$29,500 spent by the typical white household. However, when the spending of all African-American families is added together, the total comes to \$270 billion per year. If African-American consumers were a separate country in terms of the goods and services they purchase, they would represent/fourteenth most powerful economic unit on earth. The Latino consumer market is nearly as large, representing about \$200 billion annually.

Latino, Asian-American and African-American consumers are also frequently ignored because of flawed data-collection techniques for marketing. In a typical random dialing sample done by corporations, the yield of blacks who are contacted is usually

6 to 8 percent, well below the actual percentage of African Americans in the general populations. Blacks and Latinos living in urban areas, and especially in low-to-moderate income neighborhoods, are rarely if ever contacted directly. White marketing researchers as a rule avoid black urban housing projects.

There's also the crucial factor of culture, which much of white corporate America does not understand. It's the simple observation that people who possess different ethnic heritages, customs and social backgrounds will also have divergent preferences, tastes and choices. We may all be Americans, but we don't all eat the same foods. A blue collar Polish-American family in Chicago won't prepare the same meals as a middle class Mexican-American family in the San Antonio suburbs.

In a recent issue of the Wall Street

Journal, data on consumer spending patterns showed that black families spend much more for certain items each year than whites. In the category of food, the average black household spends \$23.84 per year for hot dogs, about 20.2 percent more than the \$19.83 spent by white households. African Americans spend 35.5 percent more than whites for fresh fish (\$52.71 vs \$38.91); they allocate 43.5 percent more for bacon (\$28.99 vs. \$20.20). The average black household spends 47.7 percent more than whites for sausage, 53.5 percent more for sugar, 23.3 percent more for flour, and 25.6 percent more for baby food. African Americans not only buy 44.7 percent more noncarbonated fruit flavored drinks than whites—they have distinctly different preferences in taste. About one-third of all arrange flavored carbonated sodas, for instance, are consumed by blacks.

Clothing manufacturers should observe that their profit margins are largely determined by the actions of black consumers. The typical African American household spends 28.2 percent more than its white counter party for boys' sweaters, 81.8 percent more for boys' suits, sports coats and vests, 94.4 percent more for infant accessories, 128.8 percent more for boys' socks, 139.4 percent more for boys' underwear, and a whopping 194.7 percent more for boys' pants. Companies which rent household items such as washers, dryers and VCRs also depend on the African American consumer market. The Wall Street Journal noted that the average black household spends 76 percent more than the white household for the rentals of VCRs, radios and music-related equipment; they spend 219.8 percent more than whites to rent tele-

visions. Civil rights organizations should become more aware of these patterns of African American and Latino consumer spending. They should consider targeting white corporations which have heavy shares of minority consumer markets, but which have done little or nothing to promote minority hiring or joint ventures. A reasonable share of such profits must be ploughed back into Hispanic and black communities, and the managerial ranks of such firms must reflect ethnic and gender diversity. If such companies refuse to negotiate, the economic clout of minorities should be used to reward our genuine friends, and to punish our enemies.

This is the strategy of "economic multiculturalism," utilizing minority economic clout to achieve our larger goals of social justice and economic development.

## This Way for Black Empowerment

By Dr. Lenora Fulani

### Black Representation Is Not Black Leadership

Some people are saying that things are better than ever for African Americans. We have 38 members of Congress, an increase of 52% over the last session; we have high level Black Cabinet appointees; we have mayors in major cities around the country. But Black representation is not the same thing as Black leadership. And while we might have an abundance of representation, we are suffering from very serious lack of leadership.

What is the difference? Leadership means engaging how America works—and doesn't work—in areas of foreign policy, welfare and the economy. Leadership means constantly involving ordinary people in the process of evaluating social, economic and cultural policy and making determinations about whether they add up to something positive for African Americans and for all Americans.

We might have an increase in Black representation. But we also have

many instances of misleadership that have negatively impacted on our people. One such situation is the crisis in the central African country of Zaire.

The early '60s was the height of the anti-colonial independence movement which swept Africa. Patrice Lumumba, the much beloved, democratically elected prime minister of what was then the Congo, had a vision for economic and social development based on the needs of the Congolese people and not on the interests of the U.S. and European multi-national corporations who sought to exploit Africa in a variety of post-colonial arrangements. For that vision, Lumumba was ceaselessly red-baited by the U.S. and finally assassinated by the CIA and his successor, Mobutu Sese Seko, in 1961.

Since then, Mobutu, under the guise of a pseudo-nationalist called for African "authenticity" has butchered the Congolese people, raped Con-

golese women and used the power of his self-appointed position of President-for-Life to steal government money and resources to make himself the third richest man in the world. Zaire is now among the poorest of countries, in spite of the great wealth of its natural resources. And the democracy movement, led by Etienne Tshisekedi wa Mulumba, currently the prime minister of the democratically elected transitional government, has been under siege politically and militarily for the last several weeks by the tyrannical Mobutu regime.

It was under these circumstances that I went to speak to our representatives in the Congressional Black Caucus. Now is the time, I told them, that public pressure has to be brought to bear on President Clinton. There has to be a public break with the policy of the last thirty years. Mobutu has to be removed. His assets have to be frozen. The United Nations has to summon

Mobutu for a public accounting and the Tshisekedi government has to be given the support that it needs to consolidate its position and set Zaire on the road to recovery.

Here's what some of our Black elected officials said to me: We agree with you, Dr. Fulani, but we have to work behind the scenes. We're speaking with Clinton and he's assured us that something will be done. If we put heat on him, it's going to backfire on us. He'll cut funds to our local programs. Oh, Dr. Fulani, you're naive, you don't know how politics works.

Here's what I said to them: Congressman, I don't want to tell you your business. You are, after all, a member of Congress, and I am just the chairperson of a minor political party. But with all due respect, brother, it strikes me that it is you who doesn't know anything about how politics works. Congressman, maybe you only read books by Black people, but I've read

some books by white people, and I've studied how white elected officials get things for their communities. They play power politics. And you need to do the same. You need to put some public heat on Bill Clinton.

The Jewish community demands support for Israel and for Jewish interests here. Why don't Black people get this deal? Isn't that what the Black Caucus is supposed to do for us? Isn't it the case that the more demands that we make as a people, the more we get?

The CBC explains its inaction on Zaire by saying that its proper concern is with domestic issues, that it should be putting its energies into domestic economic and social opportunities which benefit African Americans. But I think that the economic and political development of African Americans is inextricably tied to that of people of color around the world.

The patterns of investment which have systematically underdeveloped

Africa are the same as those which have systematically underdeveloped Harlem. The Export-Import Bank—a major international banking institution—has redlined African countries, just as U.S. banks practice redlining in our communities. You can't get a mortgage or a home improvement loan just like Mozambique can't get a loan to upgrade its agricultural sector. It is these policies as a whole which must be challenged.

The basic priorities which dictate international economic policy favor white countries over nations of people of color white people over Black people and rich white people over poor white people. There is really no such thing as a program for domestic improvement for Black communities here that doesn't also address economic conditions internationally. These priorities must be changed—in their entirety. And it's going to take Black leadership, not Black representation to do it.

#### Capitol Gains

Congress's pay has gone up again—without even a vote. That's because our law makers, who received 39-percent pay hike from 1989 to 1991, have their own "entitlement program," which pays automatic cost-of-living increases every year. Except for six in leadership positions who get more, members of Congress now make \$133,644, up \$4144 from last year.

But there's paycheck gold in Capitol Hill for many others, too. Today, according to the Cato Institute, more than 1000 Congressional aides pull down over \$80,000 a year.

Those staffers also share some wonderful perks. They often take "fact-finding" junkets to resorts where they are entertained by Lobbyists.

## Letters to the Editor

To The Editor:

Professor Burt has, as always, done it again! The series was very informative and contained numerous historical facts. His timely critique has encouraged me to purchase the book.

Sincerely,  
J. Allen  
Portland, OR



Letter To The Editor

Once again I am writing to you with concerns arising out of the ordered support on the above referenced case.

My original complaint was not addressed, as the Risk Management Department found I should have filed a complaint prior to the two year limitation. I have adjusted to that loss, but am now concerned about this case once again.

In November, 1992 I contacted Milo's Barbeque to speak to Mr. Lindsey. Only to be told that he was now employed at the Red Robin

in Eugene. I immediately called him at that business to verify that indeed he was employed there, then called the Eugene SED office to give them that information.

Several months passed, I once again called the Eugene SED office to inquire as to why I had not received any support since Sept or Oct, and was told that the State didn't know where Mr. Lindsey was employed. I then called Mr. Lindsey once again at the Red Robin, then re-called the Eugene SED office to once again verify that indeed he was employed there.

We now come to March 1993 and when I contacted the Eugene SED office several weeks ago, they told me there was some problem with the zip code on the notice to the Red Robin, and nobody had been served. I once again called Mr. Lindsey at the Red Robin, spoke with him and re-called the Eugene SED office to report that indeed Mr. Lindsey was employed at that restaurant.

If I were not a somewhat reasonable adult, I would begin to think that there is a BIG note in the computer file on this case that says "do not follow

up". Possibly circumstance or just irony have dictated the events surrounding my receiving child support, but when the Obligor is full time employed and the State somehow just cannot figure out a way to obtain the ordered withholding I view that as a problem. What must I do to ensure that some justice is carried out in this matter. Do I now file a Tort Claim so it will be within the two year limit or wait to hear from somebody in your office.

Please advise.  
Sincerely,  
Jeanne Lindsey