

EDITORIAL

The Portland Observer

perspective

Is It "Slick Willie", "Weak Willie", Or 'On-The-Job' Training For President?

Lani Guinier has been withdrawn as nominee to head the civil rights division of the Justice Department, and with her has been withdrawn the hopes of many blacks and liberals that with the support of Attorney General Janet Reno, there would be at the very top a strong enforcement of civil rights for minorities and women.

Many are recalling Jessie Jackson's refusal to give an unqualified endorsement to Clinton's candidacy. Today, the Reverend is saying, "When these strong winds blow, he [Clinton] tends to back



By Professor McKinley Burt

away." Others have voiced the same opinion regarding a number of legislative meant to implement the promises made during the election campaign. And as to be expected the civil rights community and the Congressional Black Caucus are expressing anger and frustration.

Ms. Lani Guinier has repeatedly demonstrated that she is a strong and competent lawyer, and a first rank legal scholar. It must have been extremely humiliating to have been called into the oval office and told by her old 'friend' and former

schoolmate that he could no longer support the candidacy because he "had not adequately examined" her writings and philosophies. How did the president put it? "This particular article of yours in the University of Michigan Law Review" seem to be arguing for principles of proportional representation and minority veto in legislative bodies-nations that are inconsistent with my own beliefs." Now, he tells her.

But, we have it that for weeks conservatives have been making an issue of Guinier's openly expressed views in these matters, voting rights Act, civil rights statutes and a need to increase the political power of blacks and other minorities. We ask again, "Is it Slick Willie, Weak Willie", or

just 'amateur night' at the White House? That self-anointed posture of a "middle-of-the road, conservative Democrat" (whatever that is) may yet stagger on the shoals of political realities. It's a perilous vocation.

Last summer several readers and friends were on my case because I wasn't using this column to beat the drums for Clinton's presidential candidacy. How could I, looking at Arkansas' miserable record, whether it was labor laws, civil rights or pollution? "About the worst in the nation, and labor unions, the ecology people and many minorities will tell you that." There were several high-level appointments of blacks to high-level state jobs but the overall situation of blacks and the economy has not

changed there. An omen of things to come?

In other words, I was quite suspicious of the man's rhetoric for minorities have been fooled so often. Of course it was time for a change on the national scene which had become an intolerable situation, not only for the poor and minorities, but for the nation as a whole. Though not always in step with Rev. Jackson, I did feel that I understood his reservations about openly endorsing Clinton--his preference for securing firm commitments in certain areas and solid demonstrations of positions on issues which would be hard to retreat from once elected.

As Marvin Gaye once asked,

"What's Going On?" Can we be comfortable in a belief that the black and female appointments we've witnessed so far are 'real'--that is, was it untainted that they be more than window dressing while a subrosa agenda is pursued? Will they become sacrificial lambs when the oval office gets in trouble? We are constantly told that "the buck stops here", but in the case of each recent White House debacle that does not seem to have been the case.

Even now in the Lani Guinier situation it seems that a scapegoat is being groomed. White House counsel Bernard Nussbaum--whose job it was to review her file--is being blamed by the administration for this latest goof. What can we expect in the future?

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK: Readers Respond To Economic Series

BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT

The enthusiastic response to our "small Business" advisory indicates not only a receptive audience of community people who are well aware of a pressing need for "real" economic development (for Profit), but who realize there are some big voids in the information delivery system.

Right off the top, I would repeat the comments of one reader who was rightfully concerned about "appearances". He would remind us of that term taken from psychology, the "Halo Effect"; you know, a black bag (doctor); an attache case (lawyer or other professional); a belt full of tools (electrician-craftsman). In other words, look the part, for that alone can inspire confidence from the "getgo"--look the part!

I remember that a few years ago I wrote here of the "steam clean" business I pioneered in central Oregon during the 1950s. It was very detailed and sparked an enthusiastic response from a young black man who realized

what I was saying--that for an amount of capital much less than the price of a new car one could get started in a lucrative enterprise where the only limits were one's energy and ability to innovate. It was pointed out that the Portland area was always open to initiative.

I was so impressed with his commitment that I agreed to show him the ropes, equipment to buy, potential customers to call upon, and where and how to advertise, etc. I knew that success here would make a beautiful demonstration model which could engender similar enterprises. I took my 60 year-old body out there with him everyday for almost a month, doing a hands-on thing with every aspect of the project from designing and crafting a smart-looking mobile van to purchasing safety equipment. And to the library for researching industry needs.

But, above all, "We Looked The Part" because I persuaded him to buy both us 'Smart looking uniforms' with

a legend that told exactly what we did, bright distinctive safety helmets and beepers. After a lecture about "slouching, pimp, walks and leaning on things", we were off on a sales tour of a promising industrial area. We didn't get very far. Entering a hardware store to purchase some brackets, we were eyed by every contractor and business person in the place.

Having read the back of our uniforms and surveyed our mobile unit (the best looking vehicle in the parking lot), one customer came back inside and introduced himself. He was a supervisor for the main contractor of the Portland Light Rail Project, and the very next day my young friend had a contract offer to clean and maintain a number of pieces of equipment. This kept us so busy that first month we didn't get time to scope the airport, docks and supermarkets--and more good prospects. All still there!

This was to be the young man's business and I got only a minimum wage to help out on my pension. My

purpose was to create a successful model I could use to persuade a forward-looking and perceptive community agency to let me build a realistic economic development structure for our youth. The one mistake I would not make again would be to fail to bring in the needed social-emotional support our young people must have in our present dangerous environment. Our budding young entrepreneur was overwhelmed by an influx of cash and drugs. In six months his business was gone--and later, his life.

As I look over the many responses to this series, I find that far from despairing, there should be more confidence than ever in a black (and white) reservoir of talent, ambition and innovation out there in our community--and find myself more compelled than ever toward building a viable "economic development" structure. There seemed to be an almost unanimous opinion that the problem lay with Leadership. A woman says that, "not one of those 'activism' orga-

nizations with 'economic development' on their stationery is about black people operating a business or creating jobs--I doubt if these new Ebony Carpetbaggers even own their own drawers."

I find it difficult to quarrel with the lady, it is shameful that after dozens of years of begging, marching, hooping and hollerin', some groups have not advanced one step, toward making themselves financially sufficient, and they've got more degrees than that big outdoor thermometer on the bank. One reader responds that "with these people, it is all about Me and publicity--Of those three groups you got real estate for in the 1970s Mr. Burt, two have lost it and another has only half of it now. All of them were provided with an economic foundation that should have seen them go forward and acquire the entire blocks around their locations. Their 'grandparents' did just that and with half the resources

and no Minority Loans! It's an ugly game."

That is quite true and this new administration contrary to the expectations of many, is obviously incapable of delivering new rounds of cash and entitlement to the innercity. But, it has been a learning game for me as well and I am much better equipped to deal with these people--or better yet, with new people who have seen the handwriting on the wall. I'm on my job, so let me hear from you; there is more opportunity out there than you can shake a stick at. Give me a call (284-7080).

I hope I didn't confuse too many with my statement about building "non-family" business structures. I was simply pointing out that people who are not related can operate viable, closely held cooperative business structures as well as those successful "Asian families". Of course a family enterprise is an excellent vehicle for economic development. More next week.

This Way For Black Empowerment We Must Stand Up For Democracy!

BY DR. LENORA FULANI

The New Alliance Party is issuing the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The lawsuit--brought by me, NAP's chairperson, and Dr. Fred Newman and Dr. Rafael Mendez, who sit on NAP's national committee--charges that the Bureau's description of a group of people as a "cult," or its use of that description to justify investigations, the use of force, criminal prosecution or governmental regulation violates the First, Fourth and Fifth Amendments of the constitution, which respectively guarantee every American citizen the right to freedom of speech and association freedom of assembly, and due process.

In 1988, during my first run for the presidency, the FBI published

internal documents which said that NAP members should be considered "armed and dangerous." Eventually it concluded that NAP was "none other than a political/cult organization" and supposedly closed its investigation. We have recently discovered that the FBI continued to investigate NAP for three years after that.

We believe that the actions of Attorney General Janet Reno and the Bureau against the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas and their explanations for those actions, indicate that the FBI is gearing up for an ongoing assault on the constitutional and civil rights of people it chooses to label as members of a "cult." We do not intend to let them get away with this blatant attack on democracy and on the Ameri-

can people.

What is this "cult" nonsense all about? Why were the Branch Davidians, a small group of religious people who had done absolutely nothing to deserve their horrible death at the hands of the nation's chief law enforcement agency, targeted by the FBI? Simply because they were different--and the FBI wanted to send a message to the rest of us, the majority, the have-nots: Stay away from everyone who is different or we will call you a member of a cult. It was to bully all the little groups of us into keeping ourselves to ourselves, so that we won't join forces in opposition to the powers-that-be.

You, see, the tiny handful of people at the top--the ones who have driven American economy into the

ground in their pursuit of easy profits--are terrified that we, the people, the vast majority at the bottom, might come together to oppose them. They have every reason to be terrified; their selfishness and greed threaten the lives of our children and our families.

The government of the United States of America--the world's richest country--is broke. How can that be? Because being broke--whether you are a teenager who needs a new coat, a mother who has to put food on the table for her family, or a government with the responsibility of providing for millions of people--isn't about how much money you have. It's about whether you have enough money to do what is necessary. Uncle Sam doesn't have enough to do right by the broad masses

of the American people. The powers-that-be aren't even in a position to promise that there will be "pie in the sky by and by." Unable to coerce us economically, they have turned to political coercion.

That is why they have launched this attack on democracy--the word "cult" is a weapon, a murderously vicious, anti-democratic weapon used to attack people who are different in any way: religiously, politically, culturally or otherwise.

There is no such thing as a cult. That is very important to remember when we read the newspapers, or watch TV, and find ourselves beginning to think that "these people"--whoever they may be--"brought it on themselves." The Branch Davidians did not, just as the Black sisters and broth-

ers in Philadelphia who were members of MOVE did not, "deserve" what happen to them.

I am not talking about agreeing with everyone. I am talking about respecting the constitutional rights of the American people--however "different" they might be. The Constitution gives us the democratic right to come together. Freedom of association and of assembly are inalienable rights--they cannot be taken away.

We in the New Alliance Party are committed to exercising those rights ourselves, and to standing up with everyone else who is willing to stand up for our children, our families, our communities, our people. We must not back down from that fight, because in waging it we are fighting for our lives.

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THANK YOU FOR READING
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The Guinier Affair

BY JAMES L. POSEY

President Clinton's decision to dump Lani Guinier as his nominee to head the Civil Rights division in the U.S. Department of Justice confirms our greatest fears. His decision, while categorically wrong, reflects the will of white America to dispose of anyone or anything that would change the racial dynamics of this country more in favor of Blacks and other minorities. The Republicans, still smarting from their losses in the national election, used the race-compromising tendencies of Clinton's campaign to torpedo his own nominee and shoot down other aspects of his timid efforts to change the status quo.

Senator Bob Dole did a masterful job of using the Willie Horton-type of fear mongering and welfare queen-stereotyping of Blacks to conjure up visions of liberalism gone amuck to sabotage this nomination. Senator Dole's characterization of Ms. Guinier as a quota queen is a definite play on the two racially charged issues Republicans feel most middle class, white Americans are against--affirmative action and lazy, welfare-addicted Blacks. This perverse strategy was what got Reagan and Bush elected in the first place and is a pivotal issue which Clinton compromised in order to win favor with moderate white

America. Many believe this is what helped the most to get him elected. All this stuff is race baiting pure and simple, no matter how sophisticated it's disguised, using moderate expressions and gentlemanly oratory by prominent statesmen like Senator Dole.

The Oregon version of this national scenario is occurring in the patronizing attitudes of the white, male-dominated State Legislature and other power-infested agencies and organizations in the state. They can't stand the idea of supporting bills and other measures which would give substance to providing opportunities for Blacks and other minorities. People of color struggle needlessly, trying to get a foot in the economic door of a system which, for all intents and purposes, has locked them out. They don't want anything that looks like a quotas when it comes to measuring how well white Americans share economic resources with other Americans; this picture isn't very pretty. Actually, they've taken to castigating anyone who utters the notion in a racial context.

However, when it comes to the whites boys in high and low places imposing import quotas, raising farm subsidy quotas, demanding sales and production quotas, and controlling industries like trucking through public

utility licensing quotas, the terminology takes on a pleasing and positive connotation. In other words, quotas are OK as long as they favor the economic welfare of white folks. You can say the same for most government-sponsored subsidies which resemble a version of welfare, tailor-made for aspiring white folks.

It was sad how the politicians, the media and all the rest maligned the goodwill of Ms. Guinier, who is of mixed heritage - Black, white and Jewish. If any nominee has reason to seek racial harmony and justice, it is she. There could have been no better symbol for parity and equity than that expressed by what must be a burning determination to reconciling the differences of her own racial make up. The lesson should be clear now to aspiring African-Americans. It's not about your ideas or qualifications, etc., etc., but about political power and control at any cost. Even more than this, it's about the battle for the hearts and minds of the white American middle class--a play on their fears and frustrations.

This is a ugly thing the nasty white folks are parading out under the guise of conservatism. It's more insidious and more deadly than

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