

School Is Out, Except At The White House

The pained outcry of the nation's black media was unanimous in its indictment of the administration's botched process in the Lani Guinier. It has been many a year since we have seen a news photo so poignant and tragic as that of the nominee sitting dejectedly on the steps of the University of Pennsylvania law school building. The fate of "true believers"?



By Professor McKinley Burt

From one end of the country to the other, blacks are voicing their open-mouth incredulity at President Clinton's ante-bellum ("good nigger") type statement which could be paraphrased, "why I really like this colored gal--if she needed the money, I would let her have \$5,000 right out of my personal bank account!" We suppose it boils down to a twist on an old adage, "you can take Mr. Charlie out of Dixie, but you can't take Dixie out

of Mr. Charlie.

But, isn't that what I said last week in respect to the President's Arkansas performance--and isn't that what I so strongly intimated last September when I used an old Chinese proverb to caution against unbridled enthusiasm regarding the election choices: "A known devil is always preferable to an unknown devil!" The obvious logic being that in the first instance you know what to expect, and intelligently, can prepare to counter the mischief.

That "pained outcry" in the black media has risen to a crescendo as more and more Democrat "true believers" discover that the band wagon was missing a wheel. Rep. Cynthia McKinney discovers that Clinton's proposed expansion of the earned income tax credit for the working poor

and increased spending for Head Start, childhood immunizations, Medicare and Medicaid "are all in grave danger". The 'childhood immunization' situation is especially deplorable; consider this, America lags not only behind the industrialized nations of Europe, but behind the five principal third-world countries of Asia and Africa.

White Democrats are expressing the same degree of dismay as the bandwagon begins to wobble in the Senate. "Gridlock seems alive and well (among Democrats of all people) as those on the Finance Committee would raise energy taxes less than Clinton proposed and make up the difference by further shrinking Medicare and Medicaid. However, Senator John D. Rockefeller, (D) W. Virginia says "I won't vote for the energy bill, unless the proposed cuts in Medicaid, which benefits the poor and Medicare, for the elderly and disabled, are moderated considerably".

It is a given that even if deep cuts

in health programs could win Senate approval, there is no way they could pass the House. Spend where, tax where? Confusion reigns supreme, and far past that "100 days" into the presidency, no one seems to have the key to 'unlock the deck', while the band wagon teeters precariously. White House Press Secretary Dee Dee Meyers says things like "We want to see the process go forward--we'll make very clear what the president wants to see, but the thing we're most concerned about is the final product". So are we, dear lady, so are we.

Then, closer to home there is that matter of Clinton's "Northwest Forest Strategy". Have you reviewed Webster's definition of "Strategy"? Even our neighborhood 'Morning Coffee Council' of unelected politicians correctly predicted a growing paralysis of the process to resolve the conflict between? Economic growth and environmental protection. No Northwest group, agency or politician

can design or implement a credible "strategy" for resolving our problems with taxes, jobs, education or job-training direction, if it is not known how the administration is going to come down on this issue.

This is beyond "gridlock". Oregon's economic future is in absolute limbo, and now to top it all off, the administration cannot decide (at this writing) who to nominate for the Supreme Court vacancy; Interior Secretary, Bruce Babbitt or federal judge, Stephen Breyer, an experienced jurist. It's either amateur night again or a promised political payoff. Babbitt seems to be the obvious choice to continue in his role of resolving the economic crisis engendered by the lumber versus environment combatants. Why in the world would President Clinton remove him and prolong the economic agony and gridlock while an acceptable successor is found--if any.

No, school is still in session at the White House.

CELEBRATE

Summer

Saturday
June 19

This Way For Black Empowerment The Fight For Justice In L.A. Is Not Over

In a little more than a month, the Los Angeles courts will begin to try the case of three young Black men--Damian Williams, Antoine Miller and Henry Watson--whom the police have accused of beating a white truck driver who drove into their neighborhood during the April 29, 1992 rebellion in South Central Los Angeles following the acquittal of the four cops who brutally beat Rodney King.

The Los Angeles authorities have handled this case in a way that demonstrates that they have learned nothing from the national drama that began the night a citizen videotaped the L.A. police doing what they do all the time, usually with total impunity: brutalizing people of color. Right from the start, these three young men (and four others who were a danger to the community. Young Damian and his two co-defendants have been charged, not

just with aggravated assault and attempted murder, but with "torture." Their bail has been set at up to \$580,000, which virtually ensures that they will sit in jail until the end of their trial. (In contrast, bail for the four policemen who carried out the officially sanctioned torture of Rodney King was set at only \$5,000; with the two convictions on appeal, there is a chance that none of those cops will ever spend a day in jail.)

It is no longer the policy of the powers-that-be to try to come to an accommodation with the poor and oppressed. In the wake of a social disaster in Los Angeles that cost dozens of lives and destroyed the physical and social infrastructure of a community, there will be no Kerner Commission convened, as there was after the Watts riots, to try to "get to the root of the problem." No, those who rule

America--and who have ruined the American economy through their short-sighted profiteering--can no longer afford the reforms that might be suggested by such inquiry. Their only interest now is in using these tragedies to teach us a lesson.

The case against the L.A. 4+ is being organized to scapegoat the young men and cover up what provoked the disturbances--the acquittal verdict. The undeniably brutal beating of the white truck driver, Reginald Denny, has been totally extracted from the social and political context in which it happened. Attempts to put the beating back into that context have been brutally repressed.

Last December 14, the Free the L.A. 4+ Defense Committee organized a peaceful press conference and rally. Hundreds of riot-equipped officers poured onto the site of the rally

and attacked the protesters, hitting them with batons and gun butts, shooting them with plastic bullets, and subjecting them to tear gas, handcuffs, and Mace. Sixty people were arrested, many indiscriminately. Most of those arrested were not charged with any crimes, supporting the Defense Committee's contention that innocent people were subjected to unnecessary and excessive force.

Brother Malcolm X once noted that here is a critical difference--both moral and historical--between a slave-master beating a slave, and the slave, rising up and taking a stick to the slave-master. Reginald Denny was no slave-master, but an innocent and unfortunate casualty of the blind rage this corrupt and racist system inspires. There are liberals (many of whom ran for mayor of Los Angeles this spring) who profess to see a kind of moral

symmetry between the white cops who beat Rodney King, and the Black youths (whose identities, it is important to remind ourselves, have not been established) who beat Reginald Denny. These politicians want a "single standard of justice" applied in court, but are remarkably complacent about the double standard of justice that rules all aspects of daily life in Los Angeles and throughout our country. African Americans and their allies in all of you; others communities must not be complacent, but must be on the front line of the fight for justice for the L.A. 4+. On June 17, I will welcome to Harlem Ms. Georgiana Williams, Damian's mother, who has risen above this tragedy to become a leader in the fight against a system that is stigmatizing and killing our young Blackmen. We all must listen to this sister, and make her fight our own.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK II

by Professor McKinley Burt

Last week, the replies of readers to the Economic Series prompted me to furnish several illustrations that indicated I was listening to them. In particular, I gave that anecdote about the young man aided in launching an industrial cleaning business--a true story that was simultaneously rewarding and tragic.

The story excited quite a bit of interest from both individuals and organizations. In consequence I have been asked to speak at several meetings. Additionally, two have requested consulting services in the design of programs to further the involvement of minority youth--male and female--in "For Profit" business enterprise. Should there be any other type of activity for poor folks in this republic?

I certainly hope that these endeavors are supported by more enthusiasm and commitment than was the case about 15 years ago mem-

bers of several black organizations asked me to make presentations to their respective groups regarding the design of economic activities the groups could pursue. In both these cases, the interest was initiated by members who years earlier had been students in my business classes at Portland State University. One in particular, a strong supporter of his church, remembered a classroom model I developed around the economic programs developed by the Reverend Leon Sullivan for his church in Philadelphia (Circa 1969).

Just briefly here, for those of you not familiar with this marvelous example of enlightened "self-help", this minister organized his congregation of hundreds of urban poor blacks into a for-profit corporation that contracted with industry and the general marketplace to produce products and services--backed by the necessary training programs; also support programs like daycare and similar social ser-

vices. The Project succeeded beyond all expectations, and in various forms spread not only to other cities in America and Canada but to Europe Asia and Africa. Billions in economic wealth were created.

I recall that there were branches in Scandinavia, Germany, Japan, India and Nigeria. There was a branch in Portland, "P.O.I.C." (Portland Opportunities Industrial Corporation), though, like many of the 'franchises', it was not church-housed. My former student the church member, was unable to gain the interest or support of the 'elders' and the idea died still-born. However, a white friend of mine, who was the organist at a large downtown, 99% white church, leaped at the idea as a vehicle to employ the urban poor and homeless to whom they ministered.

I spent several weeks on a consultant's contract to design a 'matrix' which would first determine ex-

actly what resources were already at hand, what did the congregation own and how available: tools, pickup trucks, dump trucks, bulldozers, backhoes, compressors, steam-cleaners, sprayers, lathes, even vacant lots and empty storefronts. And then there was the need to assess the training, skills and experience of both the unemployed and the employed, as well as time availability. It is easy to see that one could organize a rather effective program around these data banks. There was never any doubt about its success and later I did something similar for a Native American Program. The people had the enthusiasm to market their resources. Why don't we? Scaled-down versions are quite possible.

Now, I note that several of you readers who are "striking back from the empire" are voicing suspicions that there must be some type of conspiracy in force against 'real' Black Economic Development-- "agents loose in the community"-- "a new version of COINTELPRO, ETC." Before speculating that far, perhaps we should examine ourselves first and the cultural grooves from which most seem unable to escape. Generations of activists are succeeding generations of those whose ambitions and livelihoods are tied to "escalating the quality of life of the poor".

Perhaps the economic trap in which African Americans find themselves serves the purposes of those

blacks and whites whose standard of life depends on the preservation of a non-economic minded ghetto to which they can sell their social and philosophical wares. How long should we be led by people who cannot operate a corner store or make a door stop?

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

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1993 National Black Theatre Festival



Two of the stars of ABC-TV's "Homefront" series, Dick Anthony Williams (left) and Hattie Winston helped announce plans for the 1993 National Black Theatre Festival, which will be held here August 2-7. The announcement also featured Larry Leon Hamlin (right), the festival's founder, producer and artistic director; James

W. Johnston (second from right), chairman and CEO of R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., who announced a \$125,000 commitment by his company to the festival; Will Jenkins (second from left), president of the N.C. Black Repertory Theatre; and Herman LeVern Jones, special assistant to the festival's producer. Launched in 1989 and held

every other year, the internationally acclaimed festival this year features performances by more than 20 Black theater companies from across the nation, workshops and seminars for Black theater groups, and a host of celebrities including Sidney Poitier, Della Reese, Harry Belafonte and Gregory Hines.

The Portland Observer

(USPS 959-680)
OREGON'S OLDEST AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLICATION
Established in 1970 by Alfred L. Henderson

Joyce Washington
Publisher

The PORTLAND OBSERVER is located at
4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Portland, Oregon 97211
503-288-0033 • Fax 288-0015

Deadline for all submitted materials:
Articles: Monday, 5:00 pm--Ads: Tuesday, noon
POSTMASTER: Send Address Changes to: Portland Observer, P.O.
Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208. Second class postage paid at Portland
Oregon.

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Subscriptions: \$30.00 per year.

The Portland Observer--Oregon's Oldest African-American Publication--is a member of the National Newspaper Association--Founded in 1885, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc., New York, NY, and The West Coast Black Publishers Association--Serving Portland and Vancouver

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