

# The Miseducation Of The Negro: Part II

by Professor McKinley Burt

I pointed out in the first article (Sept. 1) that this title, taken from the book by the same name, simply reflects a social situation with historical roots—but that such was not always the case. At least in the sense that earlier blacks mounted united countervailing forces to offset such a crippling and degrading form of social control. A further point was made with an inference that many African Americans are naively persuaded the establishment will or can bring about the massive corrections needed. And seemingly have lost faith in their own abilities to educate themselves. And to direct their future.

My references to a thoroughly-documented and quite sophisticated African education effort that catapulted that continent far ahead of the rest of the world was to demonstrate a millennium-old capacity to master the intellectual components of culture and civilization. This was accomplished 4000 years ago in contiguous areas now known as the separate states of Egypt, The Sudan, Ethiopia, Somali, and Western Saudi Arabia. But, hold that for now; let us take a quantum leap forward to a more recent time, and on this very continent. We have not always been

so helpless.

In the introduction to my book, a "Black Inventors of America," I quoted General Saxton, a Union soldier assigned to the army of occupation in the South after the Civil War. I paraphrase here from his original reports found in the official military archives (I found much material here with the help of the National Guard liberian, as well as at the Howard University Moorland Library).

"The newly-freed slaves in areas under my command have shown an extraordinary ability to set up the necessary infrastructure to go on with their lives. This includes the governmental agencies to operate schools, build and maintain roads, supervise elections, maintain law and order, form fire brigades, and other wise administer their affairs in an effective manner." (Also see 'Carter G. Woodson, Dubois, Genoverse, Merier & Rudnick, et al').

Several of these authors describe the black minister who in the 1860s set up his own school, built desks and benches and even salvaged books and paper from old abandoned plantation mansions. This remarkable man waited not on the bureaucracy but proceeded to "teach myself Latin and Greek from these texts as well as

algebra and geometry so that I could better educate my charges. For our biology lessons, I went into the woods and captured insects, frogs and the like and mounted them for exhibits". Of course, he also worked to support his family and to feed some of the little children who had no parents and slept on the floor of his little school. We really had what it takes at one

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time, didn't we? We need these people today.

Now, I began to research and assemble this type of material long before I began teaching at the university. I, like many in my lecture audiences, was amazed at the prolific output of early black inventors, some of whom wrote their own patent de-

scriptions. It began to dawn that there was much higher degree of literacy among African Americans of that period than has been acknowledged by historians, the carpetbaggers and racists. As I traveled around the country on the lecture circuit in the 1970s, blacks in the audiences would invite me to their homes to see family papers and sketches on ideas for inventing--

drive toward educational excellence--bootstrap, public or whatever--they are reiterated here because so many in the education establishment (black and white) have bought into the previously well-financed concept that such "educational excellence" can be imposed from the top down. Never have so many bright eyed, enthusiastic (but otherwise unemployable) experts based their pedagogical careers, pensions and health insurance on the idea that there exists in this country a helpless black mass that they have been properly educated to save from extinction.

Abounding with self-fulfilling prophecies and quite ignorant of historical-facts, this group expresses consternation that for the most part things have grown worse. As funds grow shorter in a shrinking economy, the education gurus seek financing for even further ill advised experiments which defy reality. The people need to be aided in doing what they have always done well--assessing their problems and developing solutions. Of course, their language and articulation is not necessarily that of the pedants who feel so threatened by parents and other community

some generated as far back as 70 years earlier. A number of whites would confide that older members of their families would often recite instances of "smart negroes" whose accomplishments were "incomprehensible."

Though, over the years I have written in more detail of these evidences of a black commitment and services, how to tap into the service system, what kinds of housing and service options exist for older people, and what to expect from Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. Memory Improvement Strate-

people. Is the system suddenly sincere about parental involvement?

There are a number of current issues we will deal with as this series progresses. I am reminded of the ridiculous "Black English" debate (which may resurface) as I see the "phonics vs Whole Language" controversy is getting, media play decades after the revelations of the book "Why Johnny Can't Read."

I'm sure glad I was brought up on phonics, otherwise I couldn't have read the comic strips to other kids in Kindergarten. I bet all of those from similar homes or who attended Montessori and parochial schools or other 'sensible' institutions are equally pleased.

One more observation about that early black population with such a commitment and drive for education that establishment legarthy and neglect could not defeat it (until lately). The IQ tests administered by the military during World War I, showed that blacks in many states scored much higher than whites. We are not dealing with any genetic inferiority or need for proposed federal intervention with drugs. Who was it that said "Let my people go"? Did it before, didn't they?

The fee for each of these two seminars is \$85. Contact the Senior Adult Learning Center at Portland State at 725-4739.

## PSU Offers Seminars On Aging

and continuing October 5, 12, and 19, from 6 to 8pm in Room 296 of Smith Center (1825 SW Broadway) on the PSU campus.

"Family members often become concerned about the changing needs of elderly relatives," says Scannell.

Recognizing this, the seminar will introduce useful techniques for improving family communication and for initiating discussions that involve collaborative decision-making. It also will present information about how to assess a family member's need for

services, how to tap into the service system, what kinds of housing and service options exist for older people, and what to expect from Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security.

Memory Improvement Strate-

gies for Mid-life and older Adults will meet Wednesdays beginning September 28, and continuing October 6, 13, and 20, from 6 to 8pm in Room 296 Smith Center (1825 SW Broadway).

Alice Scannell, a gerontologist and the director of Portland State University's Senior Adult Learning Center, discusses the aging process in two four-session seminars.

Family Caregiving: Planning for the Needs of Elderly relatives meets Tuesdays beginning September 27

## 61 Pacific First Branches Converted To Washington Mutual

Washington Mutual completed the largest bank acquisition in Oregon history when it converted 61 Pacific First Bank branches to Washington Mutual financial centers over Labor Day weekend.

After the conversion, which involved more than 100,000 households and more than 200,000 deposit accounts, Washington Mutual will serve about one out of 10 Oregon households and operate the fourth largest branch network in the state.

Beginning after the close of business on Friday, September 3, Pacific First accounts signs and branches in Oregon were converted to Washington Mutual at locations stretching

from Portland to Medford and from Newport to Bend.

Following the conversion Washington Mutual will be operating 76 financial centers and seven home loan centers in the state. Systemwide, the bank will be operating 223 financial centers and 26 home loan centers in Oregon and Washington. Washington Mutual is the Northwest's largest consumer bank.

"Our advantage will be one of consistently higher levels of service—a level of service that's very tailored to the Northwest," said Kerry Killinger, the bank's chairman, president and chief executive officer. "We're not worrying about what's

going on back in New York or Southern California. We're really focused right here in the Pacific Northwest."

The conversion means more convenience, products and services for former Pacific First customers, who will be able to do business at any Washington Mutual location. Pacific First offered only limited deposit and lending products. Washington Mutual offers a full line of checking, savings and money market accounts, its own line of mutual funds and annuities, residential and consumer loans, and travel planning.

With the acquisition of Pacific First, Washington Mutual strengthened its position as a leading home

lender in Oregon. With nearly 5 percent of the first-mortgage market, Washington Mutual is the third largest home lender in the state. Washington Mutual also strengthened its financial position, witnessed in the bank's record second quarter earnings of \$45.6 million.

The acquisition allows Oregon consumers to bank with a financially strong, independent bank that's been around for 104 years," Killinger said. "More and more customers are telling us they want to do business with a consumer bank that focuses on people, not big business accounts."

"Pacific First was a good fit," he said. "The acquisition allowed us to expand our network in Oregon from 14 financial centers to 76. The transition has been smooth and we've exceeded our customer-retention goals due to our strategic planning."

On April 9, Washington Mutual acquired Pacific First Bank and its 127 branches and 14 home loan centers in Oregon and Washington. It was Washington Mutual's 10th acquisition in three years.

Washington Mutual's acquisition of 68 Pacific First branches in Oregon is the largest in state history. The second largest was Bank Of America's acquisition of 66 Benj. Franklin Federal Savings and Loan Associate branches in 1990.

Founded in 1889, Washington Mutual is the largest local, independent consumer bank in the Northwest. At June 30, 1993, Washington Mutual had assets of \$14.4 billion.

### Multnomah County Retired Senior Volunteer Program

Volunteer involved for the Emotional Well-Being of Seniors (VIEWS) is looking for senior volunteers to help other seniors who are experiencing difficulties in facing the challenges of aging. Special training sessions will be held at Good Samaritan Hospital & Medical Center beginning on November 1st, 1993. Trained volunteers will serve as peer counselors, helping people over age 60 who suffer from depression, grief, alcoholism and medication issues, anxiety, confusion, or adjustment problems to physical illness. Volunteers also receive ongoing support and supervision after training. To learn more about becoming a peer counselor with VIEWS, please contact Mary Reardon at 229-7715.

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