

EDITORIAL

The Portland Observer

p e r s p e c t i v e s

The Black Family Under Siege

If you saved last Friday's edition of the Oregonian Newspaper (10/29/93), check out William Raspberry's column on page C11: "Job Losses Spur Decline Of Black Families."

This black, syndicated columnist for the respected Washington Post makes much of the statistics found in the widely praised book by a noted University of Maryland Sociologist, Andrew Billingsley, "Climbing Jacob's Ladder." What Raspberry finds "Startling" is that in 1890, 80 percent of black American households were husband and wife families -- and that for the following decades, through boomtimes or depressions, these figures remained approximately the same.

That is until 1970. "That year, the percentage of husband-wife households among African

Americans was down to 64 percent and slipping. Today it's around 39 percent." The most immediate question is what was so magical about that benchmark year of 1970? No one seems to remember any single, catastrophic event. The sociologist, Billingsley, is quoted, "Two things happened; the loss of jobs and the crumbling of black institutions." He further cites the technological changes in the 1950s and 1960s, "then automation and decline in manufacturing jobs made dramatic changes in the work force. The impact hit blacks hardest because the lost jobs were largely in central cities."

Well, that is one explanation and it is 'politically correct' in terms of conventional wisdom and the pronouncement of academics and the social engineers. We will note, however, that when Dr.

Billingsley is asked "why there was not a similar disintegration of the black family during the great depression of the 1930s", he admits to not having any answer. This is a crucial point and none of our many Sociologists seem able to provide an explanation -- if, indeed, they are even willing to address this anomaly.

Mr Raspberry and Dr. Billingsley provide further conventional wisdom (not insight) when they cite the tired familiar usually offered to explain the cultural breakdowns that became so visible in the seventies: School integration, flight of the black middleclass to the suburbs, increasing residential desegregation and loss of 'neighborhoods', white flight and loss of the tax base that supported urban services. All these factors combined with the job losses mentioned ear-

lier are usually given as the forces which drove the black culture disaster to a critical mass coinciding with the revealing census figures of 1970.

When social institutions fail so catastrophically, though it is the case that in the past they have withstood worse, we do indeed need to make further inquiry. What, exactly, did dissolve the 'generational glue' which permitted African Americans to maintain the family and eretical institutions during the most traumatic of times? The 'Consanguine' or blood-line infrastructure of the black extended family held firm in every acid test, decade, after decade -- from the Civil war to well after World War II. But finally it began to give, that wonderful institution which saw to it that orphans were taken in,

and grand-parents were never turned out. And there was an economic counterpart to this support system, within families and through black-owned retail, service and financial institutions. We had much of what Koreans and Vietnamese now demonstrate.

The reader, if at all familiar with my writings, should have a good idea of my views on the principal force that "dissolved the generational glue". My series on "Evidences of Progress Among colored people" concludes here, and I have given convincing "evidence" of my own -- that with increasing momentum after World War II, the most talented and highly educated sons and daughters were siphoned off from the extended family and put to work enabling white industry to ex-

plot the black market place. Our firms failed.

This sophisticated and divisive operation was conceived and implemented by shrewd, if unthinking, black marketmen as they called themselves. The continuity of black institutions, both economic and familial was fatally dislocated for it is that 'NEXT GENERATION' which keeps a people vital and progressive. So, instead of the 'natural' development that has occurred with all other races of people, here and abroad, the African American has lost the most precious asset of all, his 'bloodline!' Perhaps the sociologists like Dr. Billingsley cannot answer the question of how this happened because it is so difficult to make the admission that Pogo did, "We have found the enemy and it is us."

Williamette Week (WW) Needs To Stop Trying To Maul Katz?

by James L. Posey

An Open Letter:

If you really want to effectively contribute to more economic imbalance along racial lines, continue to pick on Mayor Katz. To her credit and to some people's dismay, she is attempting to nudge along a slight change in the economic status quo in this town in favor of economically oppressed people of color. So why are you trying to belittle her efforts?

She has been in office less than a year and you seem to want to downgrade her performance for efforts to finally bring government down to earth, by demanding accountability to citizens, and by championing the rights and needs of those traditionally left out. As one who has supported the WW point of view in many instances, this time you need to know you're

barking up the wrong tree. Your October 14th article, "All Pumped Up" made some critical observations of Katz which appear to be misguided. After listing a few of the Mayor Katz's accomplishments: hiring Charles Moose, crafting a minority contracting plan, and creating a customer response program: you said, "Nowhere is there the sense that Katz is putting the important issues on the city's agenda or demonstrating the kind of leadership that has people thinking about what counts."

Rachel, you need go back to New York or wherever you came from with that kind of snide assessment of what counts or what is important for people in this region. Suggesting that minority contracting issues are less important or inferring that attention to issues in Northeast Portland are some-

how less substantial than issues like regional growth is rather asinine. But more than that, it demonstrates how the so called "white liberal press" can be more insidiously destructive to attempts to establish race equity than any white supremacist group could ever hope to be. One would like to think your remarks are unconscious and unintentional, but, be-as-it-may, they nonetheless add fuel to the fire that inflames racial hatred and disparity, which ultimately results in racial conflict. At a time when the state of racial harmony in America is so fragile, few commentaries from the media can be more damaging than suggesting that issues affecting people of color, don't count.

The WW and every other media outlet ought to give the Mayor high marks for her efforts to pay more

attention to areas and issues that have been long neglected. It's refreshing and reassuring to know that our mayor has the common sense to recognize that what a society does for the least of its citizens will ultimately benefit the entire society. People in Portland should be assured if the mayor first is willing to address the problems of people who need it most, then the rest of Portland's citizen will undoubtedly also be well served. In contrast to her predecessors, recognized more for their half-hearted attempts and tendency to lip service, Mayor Katz has made real progress. To buck the trend in favor of politically weak constituents is a courageous act. It is a sign of genuine leadership based on the right thing to do, rather than the self-serving, compromising actions many politicians are noted for.

It is also a great accomplishment for the mayor, and to some extent Charlie Hales, to throw the rascals out. They should get rid of every one of those contemptuous arrogant bureaucrats in city hall who have tried to use their positions and offices as some sort of kingdom, an ivory tower, inaccessible and uncomfortable to citizens who pay their salaries. Like the Berlin Wall, Katz seems to want to crumble the partition which divides us. One reason this is such a great accomplishment is because it begins to destroy the motive for such initiatives as Measure 5. Such initiatives are in part a reaction to the sort of condition the Mayor is trying to root out. At this point it seems the mayor is laying the ground work and establish the foundation for what promises to be a govern-

ment responsive and reflective of the needs, ideas and desires of its citizens. No small feat in anybody's book.

The WW should continue to focus a critical eye on the antics of government officials, but there must be some reasonable, common sense accommodation applied to the scrutiny. No body is gonna protect Katz if she screws up, but she deserves a honest chance to carry out her plans to improve this city without being dogged every step of the way.

If you want to sic the dogs on someone, maybe a more worthy object of your continued attention is Barbara Roberts. She's has serious problems, but you need to stop trying to prematurely maul Katz for doing the right thing.

One Church, One Church

Dear Family:
Did you know that: 1/2 Black middle class in gov't work.

70% Black families are headed by women

66% Out of wedlock births.

As you know, a generation of disenfranchised children from broken homes are ravaging our communities. We see the drug and gang culture in our community; we see the children being incarcerated; we see the children killing each other; and we hear the gunfire and the sirens that plague the lives of our children.

We also see the need to rebuild the sense of family in our community

this end we constantly work to ensure that young African American foster children will not see the tragic lifestyle offered by the drug and culture as their only option. We offer these children a loving, nurturing, understanding family with whom they can learn and grow through adoption and Extended Family Care.

The O.C.O.C. program recruits families of color to adopt children of color and Give Us This Day is certified by the state as an adoptive placement agency. We need your help, our children need your help. There are many children of color who can no longer live with their biological families and they need our traditional

(Open Letter To The African-American Community)

Extended Family to come to their rescue.

Here's how you can help: come to an informational meeting to learn more about adoption and Extended Family Homes; host an adoption information party in your home and invite your friends over to learn about adoption; become an Extended Family parent; get trained to care for drug-affected babies; tell other friends about the need for families; make a donation of your time; make a monthly financial investment in the recruitment of families for the children who wait.

No matter who you are or what your circumstances, you have some-

thing to offer our children who have no permanent family. Can you find room in our home or in your heart to help these children who wait?

Please call us today and let us know that you care about the future of African-American children. The numbers are:
One Church, One Child At 285-7634 or,
Give Us This Day, Inc. At 288-4335. From: The Directors/Staff/and Volunteers of O.C.O.C. and G.U.T.D. A Collaborative Partnership in the best interest of our children and families.

Metro Performing Arts

Contact: Susan Davis or Nancy Thompson, 823-3660

Who: Metro Performing Arts is a City Arts program of Portland Parks and Recreation, offering a wide variety of performing arts classes throughout the city for all ages and levels.

What: Performing Arts Classes, starting November 1st Beginning, Intermediate and Advanced levels available Preschool Dance, Ballet, Pointe, Tap, Jazz, Modern, Morris Dance, Highland, Aerobic Dance, Creative Dramatics, Play Production, Introduction to Music, Artworks, Watercolors

Where: Metro Performing Arts studios at MPA/Rice School, 6433 NE Tillamook, Portland, OR 97213; MPA/Laurelhurst Park, 3756 SE Oak, Portland, OR 97215

When: Classes are beginning the week of November 1st. Students may register now. Class sizes are limited so early registration is advised.

How: Students may register by phone or with a charge card, by mail or in person at either site.

Tell It To The Judge 992 Arguments

by Judge Leslie Isaiah Gaines

"Would you both please check your calendars" to see what date you will be available to kill each other?"

They had been married for seven years. They had successfully raised five wonderful children. Yet, their marriage had the characteristics of a dry martini... on the rocks.

The police officers knew them on a first name basis and the police cruiser could practically guide itself to their door. The routine weekend domestic disturbance runs to their home were regular enough for the neighbors to set their clocks by.

As many of us old-fashion-husbands have been trained and programmed to do, he had already given his wife his paycheck. From what I could understand from the confusing evidence, he was already intoxicated. Argument 992 started because his wife would not give him anymore money to buy more alcohol.

Did she put him out of the house? Did he put her out of the house? Did they put each other out of the house? After an hour of mixed-up testimony and a legal pad full of notes, who knows?

The one thing that was clear to

me after hearing all of the verbal "crossfire" was that the poor police officers were the true victims in this case.

One police officer almost testified with his head in his hands, about the numerous runs that they had made to break the couples' on-going-lovers-quarrels.

To see a police sergeant, with years of experience, almost pull his hair out, over the back and forth, he said, she-said testimony, made my heart go out to him.

The police officer said she had a bump on her head; she said she didn't have one. They wanted to lock him up; she did not want to see him go to jail.

The police officers filed charges against him; she didn't want to see him in trouble. The police officers said she wanted to prosecute; she said the police threatened to lock her up, if she didn't.

After my neck got sore from turning my head trying to follow the evidence, that was more back and forth than a ping-pong match, I stopped the case.

I found the husband "Not Guilty" on the reasonable doubt that flooded the courtroom floor, but both of them

had to suffer a stern tongue-lashing from me for the suffering that they had put those poor police officers through.

"How soon do you both plan to kill each other? The real crime in this case is the way you both have killed these officers time, by having them run back and forth to your house, for nothing. I wish I could lock both of you up for murder, the way you both have killed these officers time."

After my cruel and unusual tongue-lashing, both of them expressed what appeared to be genuine shame for their conduct and vowed to seek counseling and solutions for their problems that would not involve the police. They stated how much they loved each other and how they would never do anything to hurt each other. They thanked me for my harsh, yet compassionate words and assured me that I would never see them in court again.

Will there be a Part II to this story? The jury is still out.

Think About It.

Write:

Tell It To The Judge
Judge Leslie Isaiah Gaines
1000 Main Street, Room 270
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

The Portland Observer

(USPS 959-600)
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 288-9015

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.

The Portland Observer welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts
and photographs should be clearly labeled and will be returned if
accompanied by a self addressed envelope. All created design display ads
become the sole property of the newspaper and can not be used in other
publications or personal usage, without the written consent of the general
manager, unless the client has purchased the composition of such ad. ©
1993 THE PORTLAND OBSERVER. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.
REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS
PROHIBITED.

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

SUBSCRIBE

The Portland Observer

THE PORTLAND
OBSERVER CAN BE SENT
DIRECTLY TO YOUR HOME
FOR ONLY \$30.00 PER
YEAR.

PLEASE FILL OUT,
ENCLOSE CHECK OR
MONEY ORDER,
AND MAIL TO:

SUBSCRIPTIONS

THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
PO Box 3137
PORTLAND, OREGON 97208

Name

Address

City, State

zip code

THANK YOU FOR READING
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER