

EDITORIAL

The Portland Observer

The Breakup Of Neighborhoods (Phase I)

After our chaotic emergence from reconstruction. The people of color that had been freed from the shackles of bondage, plus some of the free-born citizens of that bygone era, banded together in tight little communities in most towns, cities, and rural settings. This making of black neighborhoods was done mostly for their personal feeling of comfort, and the existing attitude of the majority of the ante-bellum south, north, east, and west...

Many black neighborhoods flourished, and at one time even surpassed in grandeur, their white contemporaries.

The black artisans and craftsmen of that time became wealthy. But according to recorded history; there is no way that the guns of war, nor the guns of a privileged few, or even a neighborhood, are able to kill hate, animosity, fear, prejudice, or the festering cancer of ignorance.

The black man's dilemma, has always been his intense desire to coexist with his determined destroyer...

The envious applause of his sud-

den academic or technological achievement, or the grin, but with chagrin at the discovery of genius or prodigy in our midst, has constantly been there to affront the upward mobile.

The planned demise or piecemeal destruction of our very fabric of life, has always been there as a blatant and then sometimes subtle reminder to us.

Somewhere in the legislative bodies that controls the very sentient life of our neighborhoods, there came a stroke of genius how to reduce the black neighborhoods back to their contem-

porary place. By reducing their aggregation of wealth, they can summarize be subordinated. Once the plan was initiated, the black bread winner began to lose

his lucrative place in the world of prestige and finance. Many lost their businesses. And had to become employees.

Incomes were reduced, causing mild cutbacks in living levels and living styles. Many black employees began losing their only means of livelihood. This caused many to sell off precious property to survive. Finally many of their homes were sold, and

they began to rent. Enough jobs were given back to them to maintain the status Quo. Sublimation of self-esteem and family pride, allowed us to survive and continue on.

But inadequately supplied school materials, aides, under-represented at power-meetings of the board-of-education, undermined the education of our children. These were our progeny. Our future hope, the very fabric of the continuation of our race. They suffered.

Concerned parents, church leaders, civic leaders, screamed!

They cried, harangued, pleaded, and finally after years of this, received a response. Busing.

Yes, buses were the answer. Why we could get the kids up at 4 a.m., bus them miles from home to a viable academic institution, break up necessary extra-play time, friendships, and family time. Create animosity on each street, suspicion and enemies in every neighborhood because of the competitive spirit in us. So we leaped on our buses of educational salvation, lost every ability to communicate sanely with one another, and rode the buses to and from another hostile camp.

We smugly rode these buses to a large rut in the road called; measure 5.....



By Art Keller

Lawrence J. Dark Named Urban League President

LAWRENCE J. DARK HAS BEEN NAMED PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE URBAN LEAGUE OF PORTLAND, ACCORDING TO GINA WOOD, CHAIR OF THE URBAN LEAGUE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

Dark replaces Dr. Darryl S. Tukufu, who left the Urban League in October 1993 to accept a position at Lorain County Community College outside Cleveland, Ohio.

Mr. Dark is currently Executive Assistant to the President for Equal Opportunity Programs and a Research Fellow at the Institute of Public Affairs at the University of South Carolina.



Lawrence J. Dark

"We are excited to announce Lawrence's appointment," said Gina Wood. "His professional experience with the Virginia Council on Human Rights and the National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence will enhance our advocacy efforts and help us achieve the League's mission of providing an equal opportunity to all Oregonians."

The Urban League of Portland was organized in 1945. The League is a non-profit, community-based human service agency at-risk youth, students, job seekers, and seniors in the metro area.

To: Oregon Association Of Colored Womens' Club

FROM THE REVEREND ALCENA E. BOOZER: I've learned a great deal over the past 38 years, but one of the most important lessons was the message that just as the community lifts you up, you must reach back and try to lift up others. In essence one must give something back to the community. I am grateful for your support and it is my prayer that the Lord will continue to guide all of us as we make decisions about the causes that we choose to support financially.

Black History On The Russian Stage And Other European Arenas

BY PROFESSOR MCKINLEY BURT

As a rule when people speak of the men who shaped the modern profile of that vast land, they name revolutionists like Marx, Lenin or Engels. But those who know are quick to point out that it was the black poet and polemicist, Alexander Pushkin, whose philosophical inspirations first moved the Russian people to seek freedom from a suffocating serfdom.

Though this 19th-century giant of Russian letters died in 1837, his huge statue still stands in "Pushkin Square" across the street, now, from the busy McDonald's Fast Food Center. Pushkin is the man who first put Russian writings at the center of world literature, creating masterpieces that are still an important part of a 'proper' education—not only in Russia, but throughout Europe. You may obtain his novels, plays and poems at libraries throughout the world, but only in special instances will there be any mention that he was black (Try Portland).

His passionate prose and poetry drove the early Russian freedom fighters to successfully challenge their oppressors in the middle of last century. We have the following from Clarence L. Holte, p.271-273, Journal of African Civilization, 1985 (Ivan Van Sertima): "In December, 1857 Czar Alexander II published a declaration of intent for abolition of serfdom (sharecropper). On Feb. 19, 1861 the declaration was implemented and some 22.5 million serfs were freed.

Interestingly, at this very time Ira Frederick Aldridge (1807-67), a noted Shakespearean actor, arrived in Russia amidst all the excitement.

Since he was a free black man from America and a symbol of liberation from slavery, the serfs and radical intelligentsia were eager to support him. This highly acclaimed actor was educated at the African Free School in New York, but his meteoric dramatic career was launched at the Royal Theatre of London when he appeared in the role of Othello in 1826. His abilities and versatility led to such leading roles as King Lear, Shylock, Mungo, Oroono Ka and others, played through out Europe. But as noted, it was in Russia that the dramatic lifelines of two great interpreters of the human existence met and intertwined.

Aldridge, riding the tide of "liberation philosophy" authored by Pushkin, found extraordinary success in Russia, receiving the highest of honors and monetary awards. "The first to show that a black man could scale any heights in theatrical art reached by a white man [in modern times] and recreate with equal artistry the greatest characters in word drama": that is how Herbert Marshall and Mildred Stock sum up the subject of their biography, Ira Aldridge: The Negro Tragedian (1958).

This great actor was born July 24, 1807 in New York, the son of a clerk and lay preacher, was attracted to the theatre very early on, and at a time when the city's free black community had just launched its own African Theatre. Though inspired by such noted black actors as James Hewlett, Aldridge realized that the only way for a serious and ambitious young black actor to succeed was to emigrate. Accordingly, when he was

17 or 18, Aldridge worked his passage to Liverpool as a ship's steward.

His early years were made very difficult by a racist London media—they even suggested that his lips were too thick to pronounce many words distinctly. However, he eventually won the acclaim of the countryside (like "off Broadway" in the U.S.), and went on from there to win over audiences and critics throughout continental Europe. There were enthusiastic ovations in Brussels, Cologne, Frankfurt, Basle, Leipzig, Berlin, Dresden, Hamburg, Vienna, Budapest, ETC. By the time he returned to London, he could no longer be denied the respect due him; internationally recognized, he had been knighted among other honors.

It was in 1858 that he was invited to Russia, to give 12 performances at St. Petersburg's Imperial Theatre. He ended up playing 31 nights, 21 of which were devoted to Othello. His successes in this land lasted until his death. His oldest daughter, by his second wife, a Swedish Opera singer, gave elocution lessons to young Paul Robeson in 1930 when preparing for his own role of "Othello". She died in 1956 at age 89.

Black Business "Fronts": Undermining The Economic Fabric Of The Community

BY JAMES POSEY
• (THIS IS THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF ARTICLES INTENDED TO INFORM THE COMMUNITY ABOUT THE NATURE OF "FRONTS" AND HOW THEY ARE DESTROYING THE BLACK BUSINESS COMMUNITY.)

Over the history of minority business programs, there has probably been nothing more detrimental to the growth and development of African-American enterprise than the problem of a Black business willing to act as a "front" for white folks. In many ways, it is the economic version of Black-on-Black crime and operates in the same sleazy fashion as prostitution. There are other minorities that have also fronted for whites. But this activity is particularly offensive when Blacks do it. That's because the other minorities have rarely had to shed blood in the establishment of any affirmative action programs.

When the federal disadvantage business programs were initiated, they were based in part on the assumption that minority-owned businesses who benefitted from the programs would exercise social responsibility and contribute (give back) to the economic structures of their respective communities. After more than two decades, the fact is the Black community has not seen much in the way of significant results. Black fronts are literally robbing the community of real jobs, business skills, development opportunities and the overall economic capacity to sustain itself.

One of the most aggravating and outrageous versions of a front involves a Black business obtaining contracts based on its minority status and simply passing the majority of the dollars to whites. At the other extreme is the business that is 51% owned by a Black but markets itself as being entirely disadvantaged and obtains contracts under that guise. While it may be perfectly legal to operate a business in this fashion, the net effect is that the mixed business diminishes opportunities for those wholly-owned Black businesses which are focused on building the economic capacity of the community. In effect, the Black partners in these interracial busi-

nesses are essentially selling their cultural heritage as effectively as any prostitute selling sexual favors to gain financial benefit. The same way a street walker diminish the overall virtues of all women, a Black front falsely represents the image of a successful Black business.

There are several distinctive characteristics of a front. The most striking is the lack of significant technical knowledge and involvement on the part of the Black owner in the everyday activities of the business. In contrast, the whites in the business usually run everything. The Black partner's only function is to promote the minority image. One result is the business rarely hires people who look like the Black owner. Often, there is a well-rehearsed alibi set up to answer challenges in this area, including the standard response that there are few Blacks qualified to fill these positions. Consequently, the profits and benefits of the business do not substantially benefit Black families and the Black community.

Although the practice of fronting is prevalent in Black communities across the country, it seems to flourish particularly well in Oregon. It may thrive for essentially the same reasons interracial relationships and marriages prosper. There is clear evidence that Blacks in business are not seen as successful and viable unless they are linked with a white principal. As in other Black/white encounters, the underlining worth and value of the Black business is predicated on white involvement and control.

A sad irony in this situation is that Blacks who are often hired to monitor these programs justify the existence of fronts and shams as, "It's better than having no Black businesses at all." And, when legitimate Black businesses complain, they are labeled as bitter because they were not chosen for the competing contracts. But what is probably closer to the truth is the fact that many Black bureaucrats are more closely aligned in philosophy with the fronts. Like

the Black fronts, they are not genuinely committed to the Black community concerns, which are outside their own self interest. They often operate under the illusion that the community problems can not be solved without the strong intervention of whites.

Black community leaders have not always been well informed about the issues and consequently are reluctant to challenge public officials, as well as the offenders and abusers of these programs. Locally, nearly all the disadvantage business programs are infected with these scam businesses. The Oregon Department of Transportation, the Port of Portland, the City of Portland, Tri-Met and other agencies have been extremely tolerant of these businesses. And, while the Oregon Arena Project employs some legitimate Black businesses, there is strong evidence that a number of its minority contractors are being used to pass work on to white contractors.


Prime white contractors continue to use these less-than-socially-responsible minority contractors because it's convenient to do so. There is virtually no difference in dealing with these so-called minority businesses. This is particularly true in terms of the racial composition of their work crews and the ease of everyday interactions and transactions. They are the known quantity that fit well into the scheme to retain profits, skills, benefits and control in the hands of whites. There are no incentives to do business in any other fashion.

These situations continue to exist because there is very little political will to change. And in spite of outright fraudulent activity, few are willing to rock the boat. As a result, these programs rarely help those they were intended to assist. The failure of these programs reinforces the stereotypes that Blacks are inferior and incapable of acting on their own behalf. They further erode the public support for programs aimed at addressing these issues.

James Posey is a small business owner with a background in social work and community activism.

*YOU'RE HIS
role model,
mentor,
friend
AND
master
chef.*

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YOUR ROLES.



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