

# EDITORIAL

## NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION

### An EEOC Chief, At Last?

**R**esident Bill Clinton has had a shaky start in the area of civil rights enforcement. First, there was the controversial turndown of Lani Guinier to become Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. In the end he made a good appointment in the person of Deval Patrick - but after year's delay.

For the first seventeen months of his administration the chief antidiscrimination agency, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), has gone without a Chair. It has been leaderless and rudderless. In fact, it hasn't had a Chair since Clarence Thomas. The President has yet to give a major civil rights speech to set forth his thinking and policies

on the subject.

While he has yet to nominate anyone, on Tuesday the President announced his intention to nominate a prominent Hispanic, Gilbert F. Casellas, 41, currently general counsel of the Air Force, to become the new Chair of the EEOC. The hurried announcement of intent came just hours after the Washington Post wrote a scathing editorial in which it called the delay in nominating someone to the post inexcusable and indicative of "incompetence in the appointments process."

If and when he is finally nominated, JaxFax will profile Mr. Casellas in greater depth. In brief, however, Mr. Casellas, a native of Tampa, Florida, is a former president of the Hispanic National Bar Association. He is also a 1974 graduate of Yale University and received his law degree from the University of Pennsyl-

vania in 1977.

The EEOC enforces federal laws prohibiting job discrimination on the basis of age, race, color, religion, sex, national origin and, more recently, disability. More important than the Chair of the EEOC are its Policies, and its ability to do an effective job. The General Accounting Office, the investigative arm of Congress, noted recently that while the EEOC's caseload was ballooning in recent years, Congress was holding its budget relatively flat, forcing the agency to trim its staff 6% between 1989-93. The EEOC was cutting resources, while between 1989 and 1993 the total number of newly filed discrimination charges climbed 57%, to 88,000.

Even more importantly, the Clinton administration has done little to reverse EEOC policies instituted under President Reagan and Bush

that worked against workers alleging discrimination and in favor of their employers. One such policy, instituted under Clarence Thomas, was to use limited EEOC resources to investigate Individual Cases rather than conduct broad "Systemic" inquiries that would impact on a large group of employees. The Rainbow and others must insist on a new EEOC policy involving an effective screening process that focuses resources on cases that have merit and can have impact for many people on the root causes of discrimination!

For thirteen-and-a-half years, under both Republican and Democratic administrations, no one has been on watch against discrimination. It is time for a change!

## Civil Rights Journal

### The Learning Point

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

**A** few weeks ago I wrote a column which was a letter to African American men asking them to get involved with our young men who desperately need role models.

I said that we needed to find all different kinds of ways to help save our youth. Here's the story of one man's contribution.

Bob Moses has been on the front lines in the struggle for freedom for his people for thirty years. During the 1960's he was a field secretary for the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and one of the organizers of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project. The letter brought hundreds of white college students to Mississippi in a massive voter registration project. In his effort to register black people in Mississippi to vote, he was determined to break open Mississippi as a closed society. It was a direct confrontation with the system and the system responded with numerous death threats.

Luckily, this warrior in the struggle for human rights survived the battle and today his efforts focus on a different aspect of the system -- the educational system which often denies young African Americans an equal chance of success in our society. This is the contemporary version of civil rights organizing -- organizing around literacy and in particular, mathematics literacy for African American children.

He calls it simply The Algebra Project and it's founded on a few basic understandings. It's based on the understanding that this country is undergoing a massive change in its requirements for effective citizenship. In earlier times, good citizenship was tied to literacy and particularly the ability to read and write. But citizenship in the 21st century will require heretofore unknown technical skills and mathematics literacy is the key to these skills. Without them, African American children are doomed to failure since they will be unable to gain access to college and the math and science careers, where there is projected job growth.

The Algebra Project is also based on the understanding that African American children can learn mathematics despite the fact that often they are not expected to be able to do well in math by their teachers and by the educational system, which guarantees their failure. Indeed, the pervading cultural message is that mathematics requires some kind of innate ability which people of color don't have.

Finally, The Algebra Project is based on the understanding that the African American community can rally to save its children and that an organized community is key to creating the environment that allows our children to be educated. Parents, teachers, other educational institutions must become part of the solution in order for this to work.

In his work with urban children, Bob Moses found that there was difficulty in connecting the different concepts of numbers which is required to successfully master algebra. So he began to look for ways to help the children associate real life experiences to symbolic representations. His non-traditional process of teaching algebraic concepts includes five steps, usually beginning with a subway or bus ride to help them understand the meaning of positive and negative numbers. A project in making lemonade helps children understand proportion and ratios. His use of African drumming traditions help teach fractions, average rates and ratios.

Just as important as the math skills The Algebra Project teaches are the critical thinking skills that the students learn as they work cooperatively in the construction of mathematics from the program's real experiences. They learn how to challenge each other

's assumption while respecting and listening to other students' presentations. They learn how to work as a team and to take intellectual risks as they learn. They learn there is more than one way of looking at a problem and that everyone has a contribution to make.

Despite its twelve years of existence and its successful teaching of algebra to 10,000 inner city youth, The Algebra Project is one of America's best kept secrets. It is just one more piece of evidence that media too often only chooses to portray the violent, troubled side of African American youth.

Algebra Project students, many of whom had little hope of success in school before, have found new motivation and self-esteem. They have been engaged in the serious study of algebra in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades and thousands have entered college preparatory mathematics in high school, with many moving into honors algebra or geometry courses.

These young people will be the scientists, the teachers, the technicians in the world of the 21st century. Thanks, Bob Moses. Thanks for continuing to be a drum major for justice and for lighting the torch for our youth.

To contact The Algebra Project, write: 99 Bishop Richard Allen Drive, Cambridge, MA 02139.

## THIS WAY FOR BLACK EMPOWERMENT A New Agenda For New Democracies

BY DR. LENORA FULANI

**I**n the evening of Saturday, June 5, I was honored to deliver the keynote address to the National Council of Black Studies, whose annual meeting -- attended by 250 people -- took place this year in Georgetown, Guyana (the only English-speaking country in South Africa). President Cheddi Jagan welcomed the participants in an opening session. On the day of my presentation, President Jagan graciously received me in a face-to-face meeting at his office.

I very much welcomed the opportunity afforded me by the Council to speak with so many distinguished intellectuals and educators from Guyana, the rest of the Caribbean and the United States about "A New Agenda for New Democracies" and its implications for the empowerment of people of African descent everywhere in the world.

I told the sisters and brothers in Georgetown that, given the powerful and historically anti-democratic role of the United States in international affairs, there can be no consolidation of democracy and economic development in Africa, in Latin America, in the Caribbean, in Asia and throughout the developing world without a democratic revolution in the United States that puts political power more directly into the hands of the American people, and redirects U.S. domestic and foreign policy for the benefit of all.

The great Pan-Africanist, W.E.B. DuBois, speaking half a century ago, taught us about the close connection

between the state of American democracy and the liberation of Africa. Writing after World War II, DuBois recognized that the U.S. had stepped into the shoes of the European colonialists in terms of playing a determining role in the future destiny of Africa. DuBois argued that it was in America's own self-interest to "release" Black Africa, and "by that act release ourselves."

He wrote: "Just as far as any part of a nation or of the world is excluded from a share in democratic power and self-expression, just so far the world will always be in danger of war and collapse. If this nation could not exist half slave and half free, then the world in which this nation plays a larger and larger part also cannot be half slave and half free, but must recognize world democracy."

We know now that America did not "release" Black Africa. On the contrary, European colonialism gave way to Cold War neocolonialism. The anti-communist imperatives of the Cold War distorted U.S. relations with the developing world and undermined the socialist experiments in Africa in ways that are difficult to overcome even now. The corruption and oppression, the proliferation of arms -- this legacy remains to undermine and complicate the future of African countries in the post-Cold War era as they attempt to move toward democracy and a "second independence."

But as this century of colonialism, neocolonialism, capitalist decline, socialist revolution and its collapse comes to a close, a scenario that Brother DuBois could not have envisioned has presented itself: as it turns out, America cannot "release Africa" unless and until America itself is released. The U.S. must become fully

democratic, our government must become fully accountable to the decent and humane instincts of all of the American people, before we will see a progressive change for African Americans, for all people of African descent, and for Africa itself. That "release" of America is just now beginning, led by the independent democratic political movement that crystallized in founding of the Patriot Party in Arlington, Virginia two months ago.

There are signs that the changed political environment -- the rise of the new democracy movement, and an unprecedented level of unity among Black leaders -- is already producing positive dividends for African democratization.

The existence of the independent political movement is proving that it can be a source of strength to more traditional political players who want to challenge the status quo -- for instance, the Congressional Black Caucus, several of whose members have shown that they are willing to use that leverage to force concessions on foreign policy issues affecting Africans.

Earlier this year, as the political crisis in Zaire threatened to undermine the gains of the National Sovereign Conference and the role of the pro-democracy transitional government, I strongly lobbied key members of the Congressional Black Caucus to apply direct pressure on President Bill Clinton. The CBC had an obligation, I told them, to insist that Clinton use his considerable influence over Mobutu to force him to abide by the new constitution and transfer power to the transitional government. I informed key members of the CBC that I would report directly to the African

American community whatever actions they decided to take.

Congressman Donald Payne, a good friend and colleague of mine and a member of the Africa Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, together with other CBC members, sent a strongly worded letter to President Clinton articulating that demand.

In March President Clinton sent a personal letter to Congressman Payne assuring him that the White House shared his concerns and affirming his support for a transfer of power. The word on Capitol Hill and in Africa lobby circles was that this was the first time that the White House had responded directly to the CBC on an Africa issue.

Yet it is necessary, in my opinion, to go even further. We must convince more and more African American leaders that the interests of the Black community do not lie with the white-controlled Democratic and Republican parties. Why? Because those parties are tied to financial interests and advocate economic policies which not only do not serve the people of Africa; they do not serve the people of America. Challenging the political control of these two parties means challenging the economic liaisons and priorities which make up the current world order. The current historic moment urgently demands a new progressive global economic policy that simultaneously and interdependently develops the international and domestic U.S. economies.

The implementation of such a policy depends in large part upon the new democracy movement gaining greater and greater influence in American politics.

## Letter To The Editor

Send your letters to the Editor to:  
Editor, PO Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208

Oregon Health Sciences University has one week to make a difference and we would like to offer you that week to give a very positive story to our community. From June 20-24, OHSU's medical school will run a unique new summer camp for 45 at-risk, inner-city youth in Portland (specifically, Hispanic, African-American, Puerto-Rican, Native American and economically disadvantaged kids) called the School of Medicine Summer Science program.

During this week, OHSU faculty

members will help them battle problems they have a greater chance than other children of facing, such as smoking and AIDS. They will give them interesting science projects that may spark an interest in pursuing their education. Medical students will step in as mentors and friends, leading the children around campus, encouraging them to set higher goals and setting up a realistic career path. The program is funded solely with a Student Community Outreach Grant provided by the Oregon Community

Foundation.

\*\*On Friday, June 24, the students will present their science projects to the group. I would be happy to arrange interviews and photo opportunities prior to or during that time.

Other summer camps designed to help patients at Doernbecher Children's Hospital and the Child Development and Rehabilitation Center enjoy outdoor activities like healthy children:

• June 19-25, Camp Tapawingo-for children with hemophilia, Falls City

• July 24-Aug. 5, Camp Christmas Seal - children with asthma and respiratory illnesses, Camp Yamhill, Yamhill County  
• Aug. 14-20, Camp Ukando-for children with cancer, Camp Yamhill, Yamhill County  
• Sept. 17-18, Camp Doernbecher-for all Doernbecher patients, Camp Westwind, Lincoln City  
Sincerely,  
Valerie Ebner, University Communications.  
Call (503) 494-8231

## 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 503-288-0015

Deadline for all submitted materials:

Articles: Friday, 5:00 pm Ads: Monday 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. © 1994 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