

EDITORIAL

The Portland Observer

NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION

Rainbow Launches L.A. Action Against Media

On Monday, July 25, the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson lead the newly-formed Rainbow Commission on Fairness in the media in a discussion of direct action strategies to win greater access, equity and empowerment for minorities and women in the news and entertainment industries. The meeting was from 9 AM to 11 AM at the African American Community Unity Center, 944 West 53rd Street (at Vermont Avenue) in Los Angeles. An 11 AM press conference is scheduled to follow the meeting. Community leaders and activists, clergy, writers, producers, directors, talent agents, actors and actresses, attorneys and other interested persons were urged to attend!

The Commission was formed to combat institutional racism in the multi-billion news and entertainment industries. Assembly woman Marguerite Archie-Hudson (D-48th District), who represents South Central Los Angeles, was named chairperson of the Commission. Serving as cochairs are Sumi Hari, President of the Association of Asian Pacific Artists, and Esther Renteria, Executive Director of the National Hispanic Media Coalition. Eddie Wong, Western Regional Director of the National Rainbow Coalition and independent film and video producer was selected Director of the Com-

mission.

Rev. Jackson said, "The mass media should look like the face of America. When I see an ad promoting ABC News showing Cokie Roberts, Sam Donaldson, Peter Jennings, Barbara Walters, Hugh Downs, George Will and Ted Koppel with the slogan 'Air Supremacy,' I know that's not representative of America. Air Supremacy in the form of all white news anchors and Sunday morning news shows does not reflect the best America has to offer.

Recent cancellations of ROC, South Central, Sinbad, The Arsenio Hall Show and In Living Color leaves fewer outlets for talented African Americans to write, produce, direct and act within the entertainment industry. Moreover, many of these shows will be particularly missed because they presented positive role models and multifaceted portrayals of the African American community.

Discussion at the Monday meeting focus on how the community can be mobilized to protest the cancellation of these shows and to demand that the Fox Network and other outlets examine its dual standards of support for white-oriented programming versus African American programming relative to promotion and prominence. Fairness and equity for African Americans and other minorities

within the television and entertainment industries is the goal. The pattern of lack of support for these programs indicate a lack of sensitivity and commitment to the community by the television industry.

"We will bring together a broad cross section of allies to mobilize forces for direct action on the television industry," Rev. Jackson said. "Our demand is a reasonable American expectation--recruitment, training, employment, promotion, programming, decision-making and business opportunities. We who have been locked out want to be affirmed."

"The television industry must take vigorous steps to remove the vestiges of apartheid from its own house," said Rev. Jackson. "In 1994, it is almost inconceivable that minority writers receive only 3.9% of writing assignments in television. Is it that the experiences of African Americans, Latinos, Asian/Pacific Americans and Native Americans are of so little interest to the public? Or is it a case of gross insensitivity to building racial harmony in our multi-cultural society that such disparity exists?" Jackson added.

The Commission on Fairness in the Media has compiled the following statistics based on studies conducted by the Screen Actors Guild, the Writers Guild of America

West, and the Directors Guild.

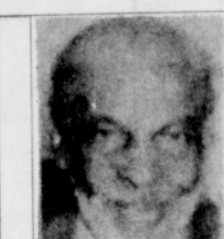
- People of color were only 13% of the characters portrayed out of 19,645 speaking parts in 1,371 TV shows broadcast from 1981 to 1991. Minorities are 30% of the U.S. population.
 - African Americans were only 5% of those portrayed as executives or professionals in 620 TV shows that ran from 1955 to 1987. Latinos were 1% of executives and professionals portrayed.
 - African Americans appear on the news as criminals twice as often as other groups.
 - The Directors Guild of America reported in June, 1994, that minority directors received only 4% of the directing assignments in 1993. Minority unit production managers only received 2% of those assignments.
 - "The lack of progress on so many fronts--access to programming, one-dimensional depictions or invisibility on television, lack of hiring and promotion among other issues--creates a situation where boycotts are inevitable," said Rev. Jackson. "We can no longer sit back and watch television contribute to a more racially polarized society."
- For more information call Eddie Wong at 510-465-0120.

perspectives

The Clinton Health Plan: Terminal?

After all the hoopla, brass bands, flag waving, arm-twisting, lobbying, political contributions, statistics and prayers intended to demonstrate an uncompromising commitment to universal health care for American citizens, it seems that no such creature will pass this session of Congress--at least not in any recognizable form.

Now, if you are one of the last of the really true-believers on the face of this earth, just what was it that persuaded you to think such



By Professor Mckinley Burt

a wonder could take place in these United States? 'National Health Insurance Plans' have been advanced before--by presidents, by Congress and by organizations (not medical societies). And always, such proposals have been defeated as "socialistic, wasteful or a violation of that great American spirit of independence."

We are told that in those countries or states (Hawaii) where such programs are in force and appear to be working, the real truth of the matter is that these governments are facing economic disaster; or that, as a matter of fact, the delivery of medical services is really quite primitive and their institutions have little of the modern, miracle hardware of America.

We peons, of course, have not the time or resources to investigate the hundreds of claims and counterclaims, the inventus and denigrations in the greatest propaganda war since World War II. So many of these affiliated, even remotely, with the medical field--individuals, societies, corporations, private and public agencies--are throwing so much cash into the fray (over half a billion) that we suspect it may be enough to support an entire segment of health care.

At any rate we may be certain that the media has no red ink on its books. Those opposing any major reform of health care in this country are now running homey television soap operas, cleverly designed to cast doubt and confusion on administration health plans. And of course it also comes from the other side.

An advertisement shows a youth cycling toward the nation's

Capitol building to deliver a pizza. The Pizza Hut Corporation is accused of paying for health insurance for Japanese and German workers, "but for many workers in America--Pizza Hut pays no health insurance at all". Of course, what this is all about is that "Employer Mandate"; the contention of health care proponents that without forced employer contribution, "it will be impossible to achieve health insurance coverage for all

Americans. Demonstrating how partisan these battles can be, the two senators from Kansas, republicans Dole and

Kassebaum, rebuked the advertising--Pizza Huts headquarters are in Kansas!

Back here on the Oregon home front we find as much uncertainty as ever--unbelievably, just about as much as existed before then state senator Kitzhaber successfully introduced his Omni-care health bill in the legislature. It is not just the case that Washington demanded adjustments and refinements to the proposal, but that there is a crushing, defeat-breeding psychological pressure on full-coverage proponents all across the land. And certainly they are being out spent. Ironically, the money is coming from their opponents whose deep pockets they fill to the brim: Doctors, pharmaceutical companies and the like. Can Clinton plan survive, or is it terminal?

Many more Americans are becoming aware of the costly medical handiwork perpetrated by the Regan-Bush administrations ("lives for campaign contributions" is one term that has been used). At a recent Congressional hearing convened by Oregon representative Ron Wyden, it was revealed that the Scripps Research Institute, the nations largest 'private' biomedical laboratory, signed a ten year \$300 million deal granting Sandoz, the giant Swiss pharmaceutical, the right to commercialize break-throughs made by Scripps scientists. Dr. Healy of NIH which funds Scripps with our money to the tune of 100 million a year says this 'makes Scripps into a subsidiary of a foreign drug company.' And with exclusive rights to breakthrough drugs, you and I will pay again, and again!



Letter To The Editor

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

In the Oregonian on May 24, 1994, there was an article in the Metro section that was titled "Witnesses Say Patients Used As Guinea Pigs."

It specified that stricter controls are needed to ensure that Americans don't become guinea pigs when they're wheeled into the hospital emergency rooms or become mentally ill, patients and ethics experts told congress. Witnesses spoke to the House Small Business subcommittee whose chairman is Ron Wyden, D-Ore. While reading that article, a bell was rang due to personal medical problems.

During the summer of 1974, I was taken to the emergency room after falling off of my balcony. A

doctor requested my consent to place an object in my Achilles Heel that would assist in the recuperation of my legs. Dr. Robert A. Berselli, an Orthopedic Surgeon, at 501 N. Graham, Suite 350 adjoining Emanuel hospital, supposedly removed the screw like object in November 1975, giving me a replica screw to keep for a souvenir. For the past almost 19 years, I have had different ailments that appeared to generate from my Achilles Heel. Even though I have spoken with several doctors, little attention has actually been placed on my concerns of now being an experimental individual.

Even though I had spoken with one of Rep. Wyden's assistants previously, I went to a Town Meeting on July 9, 1994 at the Northeast Commu-

nity Policing Facility to speak with Congressman Wyden personally. He (Wyden) specified that no real evidence had been presented that would warrant an investigation, while speaking in a more conservative pattern to all questions presented to him during that town meeting. This eliminated the possibility that the American Medical Association was anyway involved in creating any elements of control over a large segment of the population. Blacks?

Since I have kept myself very active, time has continued to go by because my ailments have been temporary. However, now I wonder if Rep. Wyden is actually knowledgeable about these improper medical practices. My reason for coming to this type of assumption, is do to a severe

headache with noises that woke me up at about 1:30 a.m. on July 10th, with the generating impact coming from my Achilles Heel and wonder if my timeline of existing can be shorten do to my outspokenness at City, County, Regional and State affairs. A question has now been developed as to whether I am outstepping my bounds since I'm now fighting with Washington D.C.

Hopefully, this ailment will be short and sweet, eliminating the possibility that this will be one of my final opportunities or chances at writing "A Letter To The Editor," that covers problems currently being faced by Blacks, Minorities and even some Whites, because this is a situation with no place to turn or seek help.

Charles Flake; N.E. Community Activist

Civil Rights Journal: Power To The People

There's a myth out there about African Americans which just isn't true and which, unfortunately, even too many African Americans believe. It's the myth that African Americans haven't been, aren't and therefore can never be entrepreneurs, that we don't have any business sense or history.

The reality is that African Americans have been businesspersons since we first arrived on these shores because we brought that business sense with us from Africa. There were free blacks who owned their own businesses as blacksmiths, bakers, tavern keepers, and sail makers in our country's early days. Madame C. J. Walker became a millionaire selling hair products in the first half of this century and her modern counterparts include Earl Graves, Joshua Smith, the late Reginald Lewis, Bruce Llewellyn, and Oprah Winfrey (in her role as businesswoman and producer).

I remember U Street when I was growing up in Washington D.C. U Street was the heart of the "black" business district, where there were all kinds of black-owned businesses, including optometrists, theaters, night clubs, cleaners, and funeral homes. A few years ago there was PBS docu-

mentary which focussed on the black business district of Kansas City fifty years ago. There were other cities which, prior to integration in the 1960's and 70's, had flourishing black-owned small businesses. But the reality is that with the flight of the black middle class to the suburbs and to integrated communities, these black-owned businesses waned and most died.

Speaking at a recent meeting, NAACP President Benjamin Chavis named economic development as being one of the priorities of the African American community as we enter the next century. Dr. Chavis said, "We thought that if we only could get the political power, we could change things. But, we've found out we need the economic power as well." Or as some have put it, if you can't buy the soda when you sit down at the counter, having the right to sit at the counter really doesn't mean much.

Clearly, we need healthy African American-owned businesses if African American communities are to survive. Small businesses provide the largest numbers of jobs in this country and with unemployment rates at least double that of whites, African American desperately need jobs.

In Los Angeles they're not just talking about economic development in the African American community,

they're doing something about it. One of its key supporters has been Congresswoman Maxine Waters. While Rebuild L.A. was getting all the headlines about what it was going to do for the people of Los Angeles, Community Build got busy with the people. The results are exciting - and challenging to the rest of us.

Leimert Park is one of Community Build's projects. It's a block-long area of shops, jazz clubs and a theater - all African American-owned. The names are exotic -- Africa By the Yard, the Venusian Salon, the Code of Consciousness.

But the businesses translate into real community development. Culturally, Leimert Park is a haven for African American artists, who can sing or tell jokes or play jazz at the clubs in the neighborhood. Artists can exhibit in the city-sponsored arts festivals. The Museum in Black houses centuries-old masks and original manuscripts by Richard Wright and Alex Haley and even shackles used on slaves.

Socially, Leimert Park has become the center of the African American community in Los Angeles. It's like Harlem was during the Harlem Renaissance or like Memphis was to the blues or New Orleans was to jazz. It gives the Los Angeles African American community a point of focus

and a sense of ownership like it once had in Watts, which is now half Latino/Latina.

Economically, Leimert Park has brought about not only a renaissance of black businesses, but has enabled middle class African Americans to want to move back to that community to live. It has helped to stop the flight to the suburbs and enabled a viable community once again to flower.

One of Leimert Park's driving forces has been actress Marla Gibbs, whose Vision Theater is an anchor to the development going on there. She has invested more than two million dollars in her vision of Leimert Park as an African village. Not only does her arts complex stage productions, but it also hosts banquets, holds art classes for children and church meetings and counseling programs for victims of domestic violence and rape.

Leimert Park is an exciting story of how when our total community works together and makes economic development a priority, our communities will be revitalized. Perhaps you know of other African American economic development success stories going on in your community. Write to me at 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115 and I'll share them. We've got to create economic power with the people if our nation is to flourish in the next century.

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