

EDITORIAL

Civil Rights Journal

To Invade Or Not To Invade, That Is The Question

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

As American ships and soldiers make their way to the little island of Haiti, the war talk escalates.

Should the United States invade Haiti to get rid of the illegal military rulers who overthrew the democratically elected President, Jean Bertrand Aristide? Or should we wait and see if the sanctions imposed by a United Nations embargo will really work and force the military to step down? To invade or not to invade? That is the question facing the White House as it grapples with what is the right course to take to secure a democracy for the people of Haiti. Two things are certain - there are no easy answers to the question and all of the answers must somehow deal with the question of race.

There are no easy answers to the problem of what to do with Haiti because there are decades of bad U.S. foreign policy to overcome. Decades when the United States turned its back on the political repression and human rights violations

of the Duvalier government because it was friendly to the U.S. Decades when the U.S. occupied Haiti at the beginning of this century, bringing along our prejudice and paternalism. Decades when racism took over our foreign policy and our government denied entry into the U.S. to Haitian refugees who feared for their lives at home while giving asylum to similar Cuban refugees.

There are no easy answers to the problem of what to do with Haiti because the U.S. so far has lacked the political will to force Haiti's neighbor, the Dominican Republic, to seal off its borders to Haiti. Every night gasoline still crosses the border between the two countries, as do other goods needed by Haiti to survive the embargo. An earlier Congressional bill, the Governors Island Reinforcement Act, would deny U.S. aid to the Dominican Republic if it continues to violate the sanctions. But that has yet to be adopted as U.S. policy.

The heart of the problem is the question of race. Now, I know that many folks feel that too often African Americans cry wolf by pointing to race as the explanation for so many

current issues. Certainly race is not the entire explanation of U.S. policy toward Haiti, but it is part of the explanation. How else can one explain the differences in U.S. foreign policy toward Haitian refugees and Cuban refugees? When you strip away everything else, what other explanation can there really be?

Why is it that even now, even with the steady hand of a Washington veteran and respected African American leader, William H. Gray, III, that we still have a policy which will not give safe haven to any Haitian political refugee intercepted at sea? Isn't it only fair if we are to ask other nearby nations to accept Haitian boat people, for us to be willing to allow some of them into the U.S. as well? Isn't race a factor in the deepest recesses of these policies?

The members of the Congressional Black Caucus would probably all agree that race is part of the explanation, but even they do not agree on what our policy on invasion should be. Some members, including Congresswoman Carrie Meek of Miami, believe that we must invade in order to restore democracy to that tragic

country. Congressman Ron Dellums, chair of the House Armed Services Committee, disagrees. He argues that we must really put force on the Dominican Republic, which serves as Haiti's lifeline, and allow economic and other sanctions to work.

As a difficult and complex question, I agree with Congressman Dellums. I believe that the people of Haiti deserve the democratic government that they elected. I believe that Jean Bertrand Aristide will serve the people of Haiti well, that he is a fearless and thoughtful leader. But, I do not believe that the U.S. has yet done all it can and should to bring down the military in Haiti.

The people of Haiti are already hurting. They are already bleeding, starving, and dying. Let's get rid of racist immigration policies which would not allow any Haitian boat people into the U.S. And when the military government falls, as it must, let's put our money where our mouth is and really support a democratically-elected government. Military invasion should be our very last resort.

VANTAGE POINT

BY RON DANIELS

LOCAL LEADERSHIP SUMMITS SHOULD BUILD UNITY IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

One of the most important outcomes of the historic National African American Leadership Summit held in Baltimore was the call for local summits to be held all across the nation. Given the pervasive crises devastating Black communities throughout the United States there can be no more urgent task than creating local structures and institutions which can harness the collective resources and energy of African America to fight for our survival and development. Therefore the spirit of Baltimore must be manifest in local summits and these local summits must create permanent structures which can build ongoing unity in the Black community.

The crucial question is how

to achieve the illusive goal of unity in the Black community? In this regard, the most important reality we must face is that all Black people do not think alike or share the same ideology. Many African Americans may share similar goals, but there are often conflicting ideas about the appropriate methods and approaches to achieve those goals. Hence absolute unity or a uniform approach to achieving our goals is highly improbable. Therefore, a more realistic objective is to work for what Amiri Baraka once termed "unity without uniformity," or what Dr. Maulana Karenga calls "operational unity." In my judgment the concept of operational unity can constitute the essential foundation for workable unity in the Black community.

The principle of operational unity is rooted in the reality that there are often real political and personal dif-

ferences between individuals and organization in the Black community. The essence of operational unity, however, is the search for ideas and areas of agreement rather than an emphasis on points of disagreement. This search is intended to lead to a discovery of the issues, projects and programs around which we have a common interest. Operational unity allows organizations and leaders to work together despite their political or personal differences. It was the focus on operational unity which made the National African American Leadership Summit such a success; a success which must be replicated at the local level all across the country.

Since the national leadership of the NAACP took the initiative to call for the National African American Leadership Summit, those interested in organizing a local summit should approach the local NAACP chapter to convene a planning/steering committee. If the local chapter is not inter-

ested in taking the lead in the process an inclusive steering committee should be pulled together to organize the summit.

The steering committee should include representatives from every constituency and walk of life in the Black community. Being faithful to the principle of operational unity means including people even if you dislike or disagree with them.

An important outcome of a local summit should be an agreement to create a permanent structure which can work on behalf of the Black community on a continuous basis. For years I have advocated that local leaders and organizations should have an umbrella structure which convenes the community leadership at least once a month. Consistent with the principle of operational unity organizations do not have to surrender their organizational sovereignty within the umbrella structure.

Preventing Teen Pregnancies Means A Better Future For All Our Children

BY BARBARA ROBERTS

The State of Oregon has an urgent goal that affects our youth, our communities and our families: cutting the rate of teenage pregnancy in half by the year 2000.

This is no small task. We are dealing with sex and sexuality. We are dealing with teens and parents. We are dealing with peers and pressure. We are dealing with costs, both personal and societal. And we are dealing with a complex issue that has

no single answer.

But that's exactly what makes this issue so important -- it touches all of us.

In 1992 in Oregon, 18 out every 1,000 girls age 10-17 got pregnant. In numbers, that translated into nearly 3,000 pregnant girls across Oregon.

Three thousand complex decisions that happened too soon in a young person's life. And sometimes, a very young person's life. Over 150 of these 3,000 girls were 14 or younger -- fourteen or younger. These are children having children -- children being sexually active, risking the health haz-

ards of child birth, being responsible for one so very much younger.

The cost to these girls and young women, and to our society is huge. Pregnant girls are more likely to drop out of school, to have trouble finding good jobs, and to need welfare to help support their family.

Many teen parents work very hard to raise their baby and finish school. But the road is so much harder than it could or should be.

The babies of teen mothers also face a tough future. Babies of teen parents are more often premature and need medical care. These children

start out life with less than a fair shake.

And each teen pregnancy costs taxpayers an average of \$30,000 in health care and support payments. In public assistance burden to the state's General Fund -- money that is subtracted from schools, or preventative health care, \$44 million that can't be spent on alcohol treatment or mental health or crime prevention.

It shouldn't be that way. But we can change the way things are. Each one of these hardships and burdens can be avoided with one over-arching goal: prevention. That is why teen pregnancy prevention is designated

as an urgent state benchmark and why it is a top priority for me and my administration. Right now, I am working with my special assistant, Allie Stickney, to develop a long term plan by Fall of 1994 that can be put into place at the state and local levels.

Any successful teen pregnancy prevention plan will have to involve parents, communities, and teens themselves. Already we have talked with more than 2,000 students from 95 schools across Oregon through our Ed-Net system; we reached hundreds

of community leaders representing 35 counties; and we held a forum where more than 300 local business, health care, religious, and education leaders crafted solutions to the problem of teen pregnancy.

We are off to a good start and I am confident that with the energy, talent and interest I have seen from Oregonians across the state, we can meet our goal and reduce teen pregnancy in Oregon. Together, we can help give Oregon teens a future filled with options and opportunity.

perspectives

The Clinton Health Plan: Filling The Gaps

Well, I certainly wish I could, but we will have to leave a lot of that to Congress - if only they would, though, seemingly unable to get beyond the senseless bickering and hysterical posturing involved with the 'seven' health plans now being considered. What we at the Observer newspaper can do is occasionally provide our readers with a 'spin' or perspective which may help them survive (literally!).

I borrowed this title from that of an article in this month's Consumer Reports magazine, "Filling the Gaps in Medicare." This report is by far the

most complete and topical I've seen to date; it will be concluded in next month's issue. Many of us are already 65 years of age, and two million of us will turn 65 this year. This fact ensures that everyone, whether as a personal or familial situation, can be affected (or devastated) by a sudden financial hit from that area of hospital and doctor bills not covered by "Medicare" (your parents).

This matter is of extreme importance to all of us, but especially to those who, because of economic status, find themselves especially vulnerable to situations created by lack of information, or by planning errors. As anyone who avails himself of a copy of this issue will soon see, the "gaps" in health care are far beyond a quick understanding to be gained by a quick reading of Medicare of "provider" literature. I quote from Consumer Reports.

"Since its introduction in 1967, Medicare has been a lifeline for older Americans, paying about 90 percent of their hospital and doctor bills. To handle the remainder and some other expenses Medicare doesn't cover, many people buy Medicare-supplement insurance, sometimes referred to as a "Medigap" policy.

"As important as the Medicare

program has become, many recipients still don't understand how it and Medicare-supplement insurance work. That ignorance has allowed some insurance companies and some doctors to take advantage of Medicare beneficiaries and the system itself.

"In this report, we rate 181 Medicare-supplement policies. Next month, we'll look at the future of the Medicare program, at the managed care options available for beneficiaries, and at policies for people with disabilities."

It was Consumer Reports investigations five years ago that brought some reforms in legislation by Congress. And, then, in 1992, the Na-

tional Association of Insurance Commissioners created "10 standardized plans" which it believed would correct most of the "double-selling" and excess coverage practices by sales people of "supplemental health insurance." As in most situations, there was immediate improvement, but by now some insurers, health plans, doctors and sales people have found a way to beat the system ("beat up on you.")

I cannot emphasize too greatly the benefit to be gained from studying this article. You may read it at the public library; or better yet, get a copy for \$4 from the "Back Issue Dept., Consumer Reports, P.O. Box 53016, Boulder, Colo. 80322-3016. Consumer Reports magazine is a very useful publication itself, covering in detail investigative research and tests of just about every item a consumer might buy, from toasters to fast foods, bicycles to tools, and televisions to VCRs. They don't accept advertising, so are not beholden.

The subscription price for one year is \$22. (There is always the library). Order from Subscription Dept., PO Box 53017, Boulder, CO, 80321-3017. Note that this address is slightly different.



By Professor Mckinley Burt



Letter To The Editor

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

Black Leaders Rebuke NAACP's Attack On Media

Black community leaders and activist are taking exception to attacks against the media made by prominent black leaders at the recent convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

In his keynote speech to the convention, NAACP Executive Director Benjamin Chavis attacked the media for presenting a distorted and negative image of the black community. Earlier, Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA), blamed what she termed "members of the white press" for criticism of Chavis' attempts to reach out to controversial Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan and for reporting that the

NAACP is \$2.7 million in debt.

But Bill Cleveland, a member of the Alexandria, Virginia City Council, notes that "I'm an NAACP member and a black elected official, but I would never have known about the debt and these meetings if the media hadn't reported them. The meetings were by 'invitation only' and I still haven't been able to find out why Louis Farrakhan was invited and a black elected official like myself wasn't."

"It seems funny that the leadership now wants to fight the press. When they were getting favorable coverage they seemed to enjoy the limelight," Cleveland says, noting that Chavis has argued the media were historically sympathetic to the orga-

nization. "Now that they're being criticized, they want to throw cold water on it."

Horace Cooper, an African-American and Capitol Hill staffer, argues that "the NAACP has squandered its stewardship of the civil rights movement. As a major political organization supposedly acting for the public good, it has to expect public scrutiny."

"Is the media to blame for Mr. Chavis' meeting with Louis Farrakhan? For holding summits with the gangs that are ruining the black community through violence and drugs? For driving the NAACP into debt?" Cooper asks. "The media has a responsibility to bring these errors in judgment to public attention, so that people can judge

whether it's a credible spokesman for African-American's best interests."

"In a way, Chavis is right, but for the wrong reasons," Cooper argues. "The problem isn't that the media are criticizing the NAACP. It's that the media have given the NAACP a free ride until now, ignoring alternative voices and opinions in the black community."

Horace Cooper and Bill Cleveland are members of the national Advisory Committee for Project 21, an African-American leadership group seeking new solutions to the problems facing African American communities. For more information, or to schedule an interview, please contact Charles Kalina at 202-543-1286.

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