

EDITORIAL

Civil Rights Journal: Remembering Bloody Sunday

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

A walk through the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute is a walk through our history. This three-year old facility is a self-directed, multi-media journey which shows you everything from colored and white water fountains to a burned out Freedom Ride bus to the prison door where Dr. King wrote his letter from a Birmingham jail. It also shows the march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965.

It was 30 years ago this March that a young black activist, Jimmy Lee Jackson was murdered. His killing prompted a 54-mile protest march sponsored by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) from Selma to Montgomery. The marchers, 1500 strong and led by Hosea Williams and John Lewis (now a U.S. congressman from Atlanta), left

Brown Chapel Church that Sunday morning, but as they began to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge they could see Alabama state troopers and others blocking their way. After a brief warning, the troopers rushed forward, as did the mounted possemen. Tear gas was shot at the unarmed marchers. Nightsticks flailing, the troopers beat many of the marchers and on-lookers threw bricks and bottles at them. John Lewis was among those badly beaten. That day, March 7, 1965, became known as Bloody Sunday.

The SCLC immediately planned a second attempt of the Selma to Montgomery march for March 9, which would be led by Dr. King and other national civil rights leaders. Under a federal court injunction and pressured by national and local law enforcement officials, the marchers went only across the bridge and then turned back. That evening a white clergyman from Boston, Rev. James

Reeb, was fatally beaten in downtown Selma.

Three weeks later, on March 21, Dr. King and others led thousands of marchers across the Edmund Pettus Bridge and began the long trek to Montgomery. By the time they assembled in downtown Montgomery several days later, they were 25,000 strong. Five months later the Voting Rights Act was passed and Alabama black voters were at last guaranteed the right to vote.

This March SCLC and the National Voting Rights Museum in Selma are sponsoring a commemoration of the 30th anniversary of Bloody Sunday and the Selma to Montgomery march. This commemoration will include a women's conference, honoring the "Invisible Giants" of the civil rights movement; a cultural jubilee festival, a legal conference sponsored by the N.A.A.C.P. Legal Defense Fund,

an interfaith religious service and a National Voting Rights Museum Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony.

But lifting up the past won't be the entirety of the week. A national student and youth gathering, "Countdown 2000: Setting the Black Youth Agenda" will bring together students and youth from across the country to build a civil rights agenda for the future. Many of these young people have already been actively involved in local voter registration efforts and have been organizing their local communities against violence and community problems such as environmental racism.

Only 30 years ago men and women were viciously beaten in Selma, Alabama so that African Americans might have the right to vote. A black man and a white man lost their lives in those bloody days. Theirs is a sacrifice that we dare not forget. Are you registered to vote?

Vantage Point: A National Black Agenda Conference

At the highly successful National State of the Race Conference held in the Fall of 1994, there was a very strong sentiment among the conference participants in favor of independent politics.

Recent polling data also suggest that African Americans are increasingly fed up with both of the establishment parties - the Democrats and the Republicans. According to a University of Chicago study, more than 50% of African Americans now favor the formation of a Black independent political party. Hence, African Americans are more and more willing to engage in independent political action.

In New York City Atty. Alton Maddox and Rev. Al Sharpton have launched the Freedom Party and in Washington, D.C., Mark Thompson (Matsimela) and a group of young African American independents have achieved ballot status for the Umoja Party. Out of the Ron Daniels for

President campaign in 1992, an independent political organization has been formed, Campaign for a New Tomorrow, which has chapters in three cities. The National Jobs with Peace Campaign under the leadership of Ann Wilson has consistently called for independent political action to advance a progressive agenda. And, Minister Louis Farrakhan has vowed to register millions Black America.

Several factors seem to be contributing to the growing interest in independent politics in the Black community. For the past few years the Democratic Party, which has had a virtual lock on the Black vote since the era of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the New Deal, has been trying to out Republican the Republicans. As the democrats have sought to compete for the so called "Reagan Democrats," They have started to look more and more like Republicans with President Waffle Jefferson Clinton at the helm. While the two establish-

ment parties have been trying to out do each other competing for the White suburban vote and the bubba vote, the issues of vital concern to the masses of Black people have largely been ignored. Indeed, there is such a great disaffection with the Democratic party among African Americans that huge numbers of Black voters simply sat out the fateful November 8, 1994 election; the election which saw Gingrich-Dole and the radical right (with their racist and reactionary "contract with America" sweep to power. The question is can African Americans create viable alternatives to the two establishment parties?

This question may well be answered at a National Black Agenda Conference which a number of Black political activists from around the country are planning to convene this fall. In my judgment, it is absolutely essential that the growing independent sentiment in Black America be harnessed to build powerful inde-

pendent structures and movements for fundamental change in the Black community. Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately) we will not be able to count on Rev. Jesse Jackson, most prominent elected officials and other notable political leaders to accomplish this task. Grassroots activists and leaders must forge to the forefront to accept this challenge. Therefore, we must depend on all of the brothers and sisters who participated in the National State of the Race Conference (a recommendation to convene a Black Agenda Conference was adopted in the Political Empowerment Workshop at the SORC), and all of the people who supported the SORC to gear up to support the National Black Agenda Conference.

Persons interested in this project should write: P.O. Box 27798, Washington D.C. 20038-7798 or call: (202) 736-1741.



Letter To The Editor

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

It Matters To Us

On February 25, 1995 there was a committee meeting held at the King Neighborhood Facility. To the best of my knowledge, this meeting was a result of Representatives Avel Gordly and Margaret Carter's astute attention to a proposed legislative bill, that if left as it was introduced to the Senate, would have a crippling effect on Minority teenagers, not just in Northeast Portland, but the whole state of Oregon as well.

A panel of Legislators from Salem, was there to hear the concerns, opinions, and recommendations from various organizations and parents, such as myself. The legislation that triggered this discussion is titled, Senate Bill I (SBI). This bill if passed, would create a Department of Youth Authority (DYA) as a branch of the Children Service Division (CSD). I requested a copy of this bill from Representative Gordly's office, it contains 61 pages, and from my interpretation, purposes over 50 amendments to the Oregon Statutes.

This bill is every minority par-

ent's worst nightmare, which was voiced by several of the organizations that testified before the panel. Tony Hopson, Executive Director of Self Enhancement Inc. (SEI), testified in a manner which every one could understand. The money this bill would require could be better spent in the community to help prevent our youth from being incarcerated. He also spoke of the ratio of incarceration in other countries around the world, and that of the "Land of the Free". Sadly I say, this turns out to be, the Land of the Incarceration, with African-Americans making up the majority of those incarcerated.

Mr. Hopson further testified, how SEI operated, on what amounted to pennies a day, and the opportunities this organization provides to our children. As he spoke I wondered if the Legislators on the panel really understood what he was saying in relation to Senate Bill I.

What I deduced from his testimony was this; SBI is an after the act (crime) approach, that will cost millions of dollars and the problems that plagues our communities will still be

here. The money can be better spent by helping organizations such as SEI, The Urban League, Northeast Rescue Plan Action Committee, as well as other state wide community based organizations that work as a before the act (crime) approach.

Others testified before the panel, and proudly spoke of the fact that due to the continuation of Racism and Discrimination in America, Minorities are still viewed as "thugs and muggers". This antique seems to be the driving force behind SBI.

The reason I attended the meeting was to make sure that opinion and opposition to SBI was on record. During the open microphone session, I was given the opportunity to speak as a concerned parent. My testimony was short, because the other, African American parents that testified earlier, did a far better job than I could have, in denouncing this knee jerk reaction approach to the problems in our society.

Let me now bring my opinion in line with the title of this article. The Oregonian news paper use to have a commercial that advertise the slogan "If it matters to you, It's in the Orego-

nian". The (Oregonian) have stopped running this ad, and I am glad, to me what this ad meant was "If it matters to the Majority, it's in the Oregonian" case in point, no where in the Sunday edition of The Oregonian (2-26-95) could I find any mention of the Legislative meeting held at the King Neighborhood Facility.

This lack of informing Oregonians of the results of the meeting is just one more slap in the face to the minority community of Portland, by an institution that proclaims to have the interest of concerned citizens presented in it's publication. I would like to make a statement to the Minority community of Portland, "I am proud of you, for the turn out at the meeting, for it demonstrated to me and the Legislators there, that It Matters To Us, whether it's in the Oregonian or not, the African-American community of Northeast Portland will not set idly by and let our children's future be decided without voicing our concerns. My hopes are that SBI, which is drafted to create the DYA, be delivered DOA to the Senate.

Ottis Burchfield

My spouse, a young black business owner, Leumal Hentz was taken into custody Feb. 9 on a minor violation of failing to report to his parole officer his new address.

His mother passed away on Feb. 22. I've called everyone that I know to call in reference to this matter from his parole officer through to the governor's office. With each office referring me to another and before I

knew it, I had spoken to every office at least three times.

With each call I heard "well we have no control over that mater, you need to contract..." No one would claim responsibility for this matter. And while this occurs over and over our business gets closer and closer to being bankrupt.

I feel that my husband has been discriminated against in a major way. I further feel that the public has the right to know that one of the unspo-

ken factors that account for the overcrowding situation in prisons is due to the fact that a lot of confusion exists.

No one seems to know exactly what they're responsible for. To solve the problem, all we really need is not more tax dollars, but for competent people. I mean, we have people who have repeatedly violated their parole and have major violators released in 5 to 10 to 14 days.

And here you have my husband,

a minority business owner who has been a positive factor in the community for one year as of Feb. 18, that because his former parole officer failed to input important information into his file and because his new parole officer, who has only met once for about 10 to 15 minutes, decided to form an opinion that he is a "threat to the community." When in fact his only crime since his parole is in trusting that his parole officer should do her job.

Sincerely, Deedra R. Hentz.

perspectives

Meanwhile, Back On The Ranch: The State Of The State (Of Oregon)

BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT

Well, we didn't get the conservative Republican Denny Smith for governor, but it turns out that he was quite right about one thing: "The State will have a lot more money than the official estimates". Now, legislators are arguing over how to spend the surplus millions, mainly from corporate taxes; education, prison beds or refunds?

We did get the emergency-room physician, John Kitzhaber, as governor: an advocate of abortion rights, gay rights laws



By
Professor
McKinley
Burt

and Head Start, but opposed to doctor-assisted suicide and state/local anti-obscenity laws. As the author of Oregon's nationally-recognized Health Plan and a major arbiter on the issue of 'rationed-health care', he is being forced to make some accommodations to industry; small employers who truly can't afford medical coverage.

In the general scheme of things critical to the quality of life for Oregon citizens some issues are just not going to go away. Take the well being of feathered, furry or slimy creatures. Though we don't hear that much these days from the advocates for the spotted owl, there is plenty noise coming from the combatants in the salmon recovery controversy -- and the economic fallout is going to take a bite out of all our wallets. There is no winner in sight, only losers: we have the administrators of the Endangered Species Act, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Fish and Wildlife Commissions of Oregon, Washington and Idaho, the Northwest Power Planning Council, The U.S. Forest Service, The U.S. Corp of Engineers, The Aluminum Industry, the Bonneville Power Agency, the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, the Sports Fishermen Association, and some assorted federal judges.

Now, all this high-cost action by high-salaried protagonists is going to cost all of us a

bundle whether we are on welfare and food stamps, retired, minimum wage, decent wage, IRA, 401-(C) or buying mutual funds. All of this strident hullabaloo over greed-depleted fish runs has deeper cost implications than the steep increases in our electric bills as water flow over the dams is tampered with. When industry begins to pay bigger power bills you can bet that the higher costs of producing goods and services will be passed on to the consumer.

Right-wing, fringe politics have moved to Josephine County, Oregon in force (Grants Pass/Rogue River). Highlighted by such specialist in hate as Aryan Nation and the Idaho 'Survivalist' "Bo Gritz" they are passing out racist literature and directing recruitment calls at young white males between 13 and 24. We find veteran Nazis and Klan members surfacing here; like "Hilligoss", former head of the Church of the Creator in Nevada which states that "religions are a trick by Jews to take over the world". An overwhelming majority of Grants Pass citizens has spoken out very strongly against this ugly invasion by the sickies and hatemongers.

Then, there is the matter of getting/affording an education in this state. One mother was pointing out that "even if you keep 'them' at home to attend Oregon institutions, you are now talking \$10,000 a year in many cases. Why, when I was in college in 1970, a little over \$10,000 would take you through the entire four years." Right! Around one's yearly salary at the time. The state of Oregon is in a desperate situation, that is if it really wants to grow up and play with the big boys in terms of attracting (and keeping), affordable educational facilities for their employees -- in other words, "competitive".

Lottery funds, special taxation, consolidation, whatever it takes to operate first class, affordable educational institutions in the 21st century -- it has to be done. Even a sales tax!

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