

EDITORIAL

Editorial Articles Do Not Necessarily
Reflect Or Represent The Views Of
The Portland Observer

On Saturday, May 27, NRC President the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson gave his address at our annual policy conference. Below are key excerpts from the speech.

"We meet at a time of intense polarization. The language of hurt, hate and hostility has lost its shame. Congressmen Dornan, Gingrich and Arney, Senators D'Amato and Helms seem to have no limits in their attacks, race baiting, gay bashing and resentment of civil rights, economic justice and gender equality.

"The GOPAC lexicon of code words says, call your opponents traitors, pathetic, sick and corrupt. That spirit is poisonous to the political environment, and polarizes the people and the government.

"The top one percent in our country owns 20 percent of the wealth. The top 20 percent owns 80 percent of the wealth; the largest gap between the haves and have nots in the industrialized world -- and the gap is widening. Yet, speaker Newt Gingrich led the charge against closing a tax loophole for two dozen tax-evading billionaires who live offshore and have denounced their American citizenship in order to avoid paying millions in U.S. taxes.

"The Gingrich-driven budget priorities assume that the rich have too little, the poor have too much, the corporations are taxed too much, and the military is too weak. Thus, we see these reverse Robin Hood schemes.

NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION

Visions '96

"While his budget cuts million from the poor, women, children and students, Mr. Gingrich raised millions of dollars from corporate special interests. The last five years, GOPAC--his secretive political action committee--has raised over \$7 million by accepting unlimited, undisclosed donations from corporate executives with major interests pending before the federal government.

"Beneath all of this is the race component. They paint welfare Black so they can cut programs for the poor--who are mostly non-Black. They paint affirmative action Black so they can do away with that program--even though the primary beneficiaries of affirmative action have been white women. They focus on under-funded and, therefore, failing Black inner-city schools so they can cut aid to education--which will hurt the nation's economic future. They bait and feed White America racism

with one hand while with the other they take food off of their table...education out of their schools...housing out of the range of their pocketbooks...national health care out of their expectations...a meaningful job making livable wages out of their future...and hope out of their dreams. They paint the problem as Black, while their real agenda is to reduce the life options of all but a few.

"The Brown Supreme Court decision in 1954, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were the keys to a new South...which is the key to a new America...which is the key to a new world standard...of human rights, self-determination, democracy...which are the keys to world economic growth. The Olympics would not be coming to Atlanta nor going to South Africa unless we had succeeded in our marches, pro-

tests and civil disobedience.

"Urban policy has essentially been abandoned. Jails are the number one growth industry. Half of all public housing built in the last 10 years has been jail cells. The attacks on welfare, public schools, Medicare, Medicaid, scholarships and the minimum wage have had the effect of demonizing the poor, making poverty a crime.

"The Rainbow will continue to build a multiracial coalition of conscience. However, we will expand our options. We've tried registration and Get-Out-The-Vote (GOVT). We're the best at it and done the most of it. We delivered. Then they ignored us. We've tried leveraging without an independent contract. They took us for granted. In the primaries we were at the table. Then, in the general election, they distanced themselves from us. We do not intend to be ignored, taken for granted, pushed off and exploited any longer. The days of expecting us to sow the seeds, cultivate the ground and pick the cotton--then turn it over to them to bail it and sell it--are over. We need a line on state and local ballots. We must develop independent ballot access. New York is one model where there is the possibility of fusion, but not exclusion. One party with two names, or two parties with one assumption, makes the parties interchangeable and indistinguishable, and that's why shifts take place so easily."

perspectives

Surely, President Thomas Jefferson Must Have Felt Ashamed (?)

This article appeared in the May, 1947 issue of the "Negro digest", a popular national magazine of the time.

I am very distressed that so many youth in the Portland School System get so little of this kind of motivational material.

There was a time, several decades ago, when I was called into the area's schools several times a month to give relevant lectures based on my book, "Black Inventor of America".

"We hold these truths to be self evident; that all men are created equal...". No doubt Thomas Jefferson squirmed as he read his own words in a letter written to him by Benjamin Banneker, Negro mathematician and astronomer of the republic's early days.

The author of the Declaration of Independence had included this bold phrase in the rallying cry for revolution, and now a black man hurled it back at him in an impassioned plea that it apply to the hundreds of thousands of slaves in the U.S.

The letter, written August 19, 1791, provided a sorely needed lesson in democracy for the First Secretary of State.

At the age of 60, Benjamin Banneker, a remarkable free Negro living in Maryland, had compiled an almanac. The unique volume, containing a table of motions of the sun and moon, their risings and settings, calculations demonstrating the different aspects of the planets and "interesting and entertaining essays" on a vast array of other subjects, was worked out independently by him with the aid of a few instruments, astronomical tables and textbooks given him by a neighbor, George Ellicott, a white engineer.

For six years Banneker published his almanac, the last issue, so far as is known, appearing in 1797. The first volume was at the printers when the author sent a manuscript copy to Jefferson for his inspection.

Banneker had seen the infant national rally around slogans of freedom; he had seen black men fighting and dying with Washington's army of rebellion from Bunker Hill to Yorktown.

"This, Sir," Banneker reminded Jefferson, "was a time when you clearly saw into the injustice of a state of slavery, and in which you had just apprehensions of the horror of its condition..."

"But, sir," he added bitingly, "how pitiable it is to reflect, that although you were so fully convinced of the benevolence of the father of Man-kind, and of his equal distribution of these rights and privileges...that you should at the same time counter-act his mercies, in detaining by fraud and violence so numerous a part of my brethren, under groaning captivity, and cruel op-

pression."

Moreover, he "freely and cheerfully" added, "I am of the African race, and in that color which is natural to them of the darkest dye." And he asked that Jefferson aid in "eradicating that train of absurd and false ideas and opinions, which so

generally prevails with respect to us" and to acknowledge that "one universal Father...hath not only made us all of one flesh, but that he hath also, without partiality, afforded us all the same sensations and endowed us all with the same faculties."

The Secretary of State's reply followed two weeks later. After thanking Banneker for the book, Jefferson wrote: "Nobody wishes more than I do, to see such proofs as you exhibit, that nature has given to our black brethren talents equal to those of the other colors of men; and that the appearance of the want of them, is owing merely to the degraded condition of their existence, both in Africa and America."

Jefferson forwarded the almanac to the Marquis de Condorcet, Secretary of the Academy of Sciences at Paris, referring to Banneker as a "very respectable mathematician." He also stated: "I have seen very elegant solutions of geometrical problems by him. Add to this that he is a very worthy and respectable member of society. He is a free man."

But there was another member of Washington's cabinet who declared his belief in the equality of man in stronger words than Jefferson had used. James McHenry, also a Marylander, and the Secretary of War, said in a letter to be publisher of Banneker's almanac:

"I consider this Negro as fresh proof that the powers of the mind are disconnected with the color of the skin, or, in other words, a striking contradiction to Mr. Hume's doctrine, that 'the Negroes are naturally inferior to the whites, and unsusceptible of attainments in arts and sciences.'"

Banneker's almanac was discontinued when the author reached the age of 67. During the remaining eight years of his life, he turned his thought to the international scene. He worked out plans for a league of nations to outlaw war and advocated the immediate establishment of an office of Secretary of Peace.

Banneker's lesson for Secretary of State Jefferson appears to have had little effect upon him. In a letter to the poet, Joel Barlow, in October, 1809, Jefferson restated his doubts as to the equality of Negroes which he had expressed in 1781.

Yet Jefferson's position, which was, at any rate, one of uncertainty, remains a more advance one than that generally held by white Americans today.



By
Professor
McKinley
Burt

Vantage Point: The Rainbow Coalition A Decade Later

BY RON DANIELS

Attending the recent Annual Policy Conference of Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition in Atlanta reminded me that the Rainbow idea has been on the scene for nearly a decade.

Originally developed by former State Representative Mel King during his campaign for Mayor of Boston, Rev. Jesse Jackson picked up the concept and popularized it through his campaigns for President in 1984 and 1988. In essence the concept of the Rainbow is to forge a multi-racial liberal-left coalition to promote a progressive social justice and policy agenda with and on behalf of poor and working people, people of color, women, and the struggling middle class. No concept, in my judgement has held out more promise for fundamental change in this country in this century than the idea of the Rainbow Coalition. Unfortunately, no concept has also engendered so much hope

and produced so much disillusionment.

The 1984 Jackson for President crusade was one of the most electrifying campaigns this nation has ever witnessed as Rev. Jesse Louis Jackson injected the vision and vitality of the civil rights movement into the electoral political arena. The crusade captured some 3.5 million votes and Rev. Jackson went into the Democratic Convention in San Francisco with more than 400 delegates. Rev. Jackson's nationally televised speech at the Convention captured the imagination of the nation and catapulted him into national and international prominence as one of the preeminent leaders of our time.

The challenge facing Rev. Jackson after the 1984 election was to harvest the energy and enthusiasm engendered by his presidential campaign to create a permanent independent political movement and organization. Many who become Rainbow activists, hoped he would build a mass based, democratic membership

organization or even a Rainbow party to fight for change at the ballot box and in the streets. However, it is the challenge to build a permanent organization that has proved to be the Achilles tendon of the man who has described himself as a "tree shaker not a jelly maker."

For whatever reasons, Rev. Jackson was slow to capitalize on the enormous momentum generated by the '84 campaign. Months elapsed before the Rainbow faithful were convened to assess the campaign and discuss the feasibility of creating a permanent structure. Once an agreement to develop the National Rainbow Coalition was reached with Rev. Jackson's guidance, it was well into 1986 before the founding convention of the National Rainbow Coalition was finally held. By then disillusionment over the slow pace of organizational development, poor follow through by Rev. Jackson and the lack of democracy within the Rainbow had already set in.

The prospect of another Jack-

son for President Campaign in 1988, however, rekindled interest in the Rainbow among the true believers. As the election season approached those of us on the national staff worked to transform what had become a tired idea into a living reality. By early 1988 a number of states including New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, California, Washington State and Vermont had met the qualifications to become fully accredited Rainbow State Chapters setting the stage for one of the most remarkable campaigns in the history of this country.

All of these "could have beens and might have beens" represent lost opportunities rooted in the failure of Jesse Jackson to transform one of the most promising ideas of the century into a viable mass based organization. Perhaps we should not despair, however. There are signs that Rev. Jackson may have learned his lesson and that the Rainbow may yet rise again.

Civil Rights Journal: Vacation Education

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

Now that summer is at hand and as schools close for vacation, many parents begin to think about where to take their children for summer vacation.

While beaches and mountains are fun, there are vacations which can teach our children the history seldom found in history books -- the legacy that African Americans have left for us all. Here are two such educational opportunities.

Historic Memphis

Memphis was a Southern mecca for black business and culture and no one can tell you about Memphis African American history better than Heritage Tours, a business owned by two African American sisters. Their

tour includes stops on the Underground Railroad, Beale Street, the Lorraine Motel--now the Civil Rights Museum; Auction Square, where slaves were actually auctioned off; Church Park, developed by the first black millionaire for the black community since it had no parks in the city and the sties of the Freedman's School and the Freedman's Grocer, where black store owners were lynched by a white mob in the 1890's.

Elaine Lee Turner and Joan Lee-Nelson founded Heritage Tours some eleven years ago to help teach African American children about their history in Memphis. For example, historic Beale Street was the home for black business in Memphis at one time; today there are few, if any, black-owned businesses on Beale Street. It is also the site of the newspaper office where

Ida Wells Barnett wrote her stories on lynching which catalyzed anti-lynching campaigns throughout the world.

Perhaps the most remarkable site on the Heritage Tour is the Burkle Mansion. It was the home of a German immigrant who despised slavery and made his home a station on the Underground Railroad, only a stone's throw from the nation's largest slave auction houses. A wealthy livestock owner, Burkle built several tunnels to the Mississippi River and to Beale Street from his cellar, lining them with the bricks he made in his own kiln. There is even a railroad track running underneath his house, where it is thought slaves could lie on flatbed cars.

Ms. Turner and Ms. Lee-Nelson are hoping to make this house, now owned by an African American woman, into a museum on slavery. They

have already put up posters advertising the slave auction houses and showing some of the horrors of slavery and have gotten the city to put up a plaque in front of the house.

Black American West History When Paul Stewart played cowboys and Indians as a child, he was told he had to play the Indian, because there was "no such thing as a black cowboy." His playmates were wrong (nearly) one third of cowboys were black, but history still don't tell much about black cowboys.

Paul Stewart's childhood experience led him to begin collecting stories, memorabilia, documents and photographs about the African American experience in the West. It is this collection which forms the nucleus for what is now the Black American West Museum in Denver.

Letter To The Editor

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

Kaiser's Dragon

I remember as a very young boy riding in the back of my father's '52 Ford, watching the construction of Bess Kaiser Medical Center as we drove up Greeley hill.

On hearing that the new hospital would be Kaiser, I asked my father, "Like the foil?" and had the mental image of St. George and The Drag-

on. When the construction was completed, I asked my father, "Where's the dragon?" I told him about St. George, and he explained that the story referred to Reynold's foil, not Kaiser's. "There's no dragon at Kaiser," he laughed.

Thirty-Five years later, I know there IS a dragon at Kaiser Permanente. It does not reside within the walls of Bess Kaiser, however, but lives within the hearts of administrators and bean counters who would sell a well-earned reputation of service to the community for first

quarter earnings, and subvert the "Health Caring People" to the "Money Caring Corporation."

Just as St. George's dragon wreaked havoc on the local villagers, the Dragon of Kaiser is wreaking havoc on the neighborhoods of NE Portland. Instead of actively spreading pestilence, Kaiser's Dragon is removing community inpatient care and urgency care. Instead of burning villagers' homes, it is burning the trust it has built over 35 years. And instead of sacrificing our children, an entire region of this city's economic health and wellbeing will

be chained to the rock.

There is no knight in shining armor waiting in the wings to save North Portland.

It is up to each of us to be our own St. George. No one else is going to do it for us. Please call, write or fax your concerns to Regional Administrator Michael Katcher, Kaiser Permanente, 500 NE Multnomah Street, Suite 100, Portland, Oregon 97232-2099 (Phone 503-813-2800, Fax 503-813-4733). Because There Is A Dragon At Kaiser.

David Venable

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