

EDITORIAL

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

"HIGH-TECH LYNCHING" THOMAS HANGS AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

We fear those in white sheets, but those in black robes truly threaten us.

In what could be considered the ultimate statement in self-hatred, Justice Thomas joined the majority in two 5-to-4 Supreme Court decisions, involving affirmative action and equal opportunity in education, that will set back our struggle for justice under the law. In effect, Thomas voted against his mother, his grandmother and any children he may have in the future. He even voted against himself.

If Sandra Day O'Connor and Clarence Thomas truly believe what they wrote in Adarand, both should resign. Both were affirmative action appointments: Reagan sought to put the first woman on the Court, and Bush looked to replace Thurgood Marshall with another Black. Under the majority opinion both are on the

NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION



Court illegally; both are expressions of "racial (and gender) paternalism" (Thomas' words); and both should be shamed and stigmatized. Of course, Justice Thomas HAS developed a dependency syndrome to Anton Scalia.

In Missouri's equal education case, the Court strongly implied that the lower courts had acted improperly by ordering remedies requiring

two standards: (1) students "to reach their potential," and (2) the school system to achieve equality "to the extent practicable." The Court acknowledged that neither of these standards had yet been met, and strongly suggested that these "equal protection" standards need not be met. The Court is chipping away at the 1954 Brown decision and reinterpreting the 14th Amendment.

In a 27-page concurring opinion, Thomas made an 1896 Plessy "separate but equal" argument: "It never ceases to amaze me that the courts are so willing to assume that anything that is predominantly black must be inferior. [The theory that] segregation injures blacks because blacks, when left on their own, cannot achieve [is the result of] a jurisprudence based upon a theory of black inferiority...The point of the Equal Protection Clause is not to enforce strict race mixing, but to insure that blacks and whites are treated equally by the state without regard to their skin color." Unbelievable!

Thomas (with his vote) and many Democrats (with their silence) are traitors to the civil rights tradition from which they benefited.

Brace your self, things can (and likely will) get worse. The Shaw v. Reno majority-minority districts case is due within three weeks.

Civil Right Journal: Chained To The Past

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

Uppermost in the mind of most Americans is the issue of crime and safety.

Americans living in the inner cities of our nation feel like they are under siege, their children in danger of dying on the playground or the front yard from stray bullets. Americans in the suburbs are frightened enough to spend thousands of dollars on sophisticated burglar alarm systems and private guard services. Americans in rural areas now lock their doors and worry about the increase of violence in their communities.

Even First Lady Hillary Clinton reminisced recently about how as a child she got on her bike in the morn-

ing with her friends and was not expected home again until the evening. There are few mothers in America today who could trust their children out of their sight for so long -- too many kidnapping, too many drive-by shootings, too many ways a child can be hurt.

Unfortunately, this quest for a safe society has resulted all too often only in a frenzy of building prisons and a flurry of get-tough talk by politicians playing to the masses. Lost in the debate is the concept of rehabilitation. Lost in the debate is an analysis of the true causes of crime in America.

Into all of this comes the state of Alabama's new policy of putting prisoners into chain gangs. A new policy which has haunting connections to the past. An ugly, racially polarized and inhuman past. A past which con-

dures up the ghosts of slavery, white supremacy and black pain. A new policy which already has spread to the state of Arizona.

Ron Jones, Alabama's Corrections Commissioner, has given different rationales for using chain gangs, from an efficiency move and money-saving tactic to a way of sending a message to would-be criminals that prison is a bad place to be. But others argue that chain gangs will not solve the problem of burgeoning prisons, which can only really be solved by alternatives to prison for non-violent offenders and community punishment centers which enable the prisoners to earn money to pay restitution to their victims and support their own families. By one estimate, Alabama will have to spend \$60 million a year on new prisons if current

trends continue.

I must admit that even the thought of men shackled together at their ankles by three pound chains for twelve hour shifts, having to eat together and go to the bathroom together, makes my stomach turn and awakens in me, perhaps four generations from slavery, an uneasy memory of the inhumanity of a system which we as a nation have sought to overcome.

Indeed, the convict lease system prevalent in the south up until thirty years ago was a form of slavery that was allowed to linger after the Civil War. And the magazine stories of whites in Alabama pulling their cars over to smile approvingly at the chain gangs, 70 percent of which are black, makes me wonder just how far we've come.

believes that these critical issues must be at the top of the agenda of an independent political party.

In offering my views on the subject, I reiterated the call for Rev. Jackson to run for President in 1996 as an independent. In my view the difference between the Democrats and Republicans is increasingly incremental not fundamental. A visionary independent Jackson for President crusade could inspire millions of voters to rally around a progressive alternative. Such a campaign would change political equations currently operative within the electoral arena in this country. Patricia Ireland, President of the National Organization of Women, took the position that there are real differences between the Democrats and Republicans which should not be ignored.

Ron Walters, considered by many to be the preeminent Black political scientist in America today, contended that the Democratic Party has failed to meet its obligations to Blacks as Party's most loyal constituency. According to Walters, the

politics of leverage did not produce acceptable outcomes for Blacks in the presidential elections of 1984, 1988 and 1992. In each of these elections, Blacks were unable to gain meaningful concessions from the Democratic Party in exchange for a solid block of Black votes.

Rev. Jackson stopped short of signaling an intent to run for President as an independent in '96. However, he has previously stated that running independent might be the most productive option. Rev. Jackson pledged to expand the Commission on Political Options, chaired by H.T. Smith, President of the National Bar Association, with a mandate to report back to the Rainbow Coalition by August.

Holding political options open is nothing new for Rev. Jesse Louis Jackson nor is the threat to run independent. With pressure mounting within Black America and in the ranks of the Rainbow activists for an independent party and an independent presidential campaign, however, it remains to be seen whether Rev. Jackson will finally make good on his threats in '96.

Letter To The Editor

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

To The Editor:

On May 30th, the Legislature voted down a bill to put a repeal of Measure 18 on the next ballot. Hopefully, this decision has finally laid to rest an unprecedented effort by certain lawmakers to overturn a popular election. Measure 18, which prevents trophy hunters from using bait or dogs to hunt bears, and from using dogs to hunt cougars, has been the target of no fewer than 10 bills designed to delay, damage or overturn it. All of those bills have shared the same basic premise: a lack of respect

for the voters' judgment.

To refer a repeal to the ballot, for instance, within a few months of Measure 18's passage is to say that the voters didn't know what they were doing the first time. Representative Norris went so far as to claim that the film "The Lion King" must have confused voters into thinking that Oregon cougars were the same thing as African lions.

Happily, the majority of the Legislature has refused to hold the voters' decision in such contempt. No reason exists to do so. Claims that the

voters lacked information, or that they were unduly influenced by out of state funds become ludicrous in light of the money which Measure 18's opponents spent during the campaign. Opponents outspent supporters of the initiative by more than two to one, and ninety percent of opponents' money came from out of state sources. Contributions from just two of those groups, the National Rifle Association and the Wildlife Legislative Fund, far exceeded the entire budget of the Yes on 18 campaign. The reason voters passed Mea-

sure 18 was not that they were confused, nor that they failed to understand the issue. They passed it because they wanted Oregon's bears and cougars to have a sporting chance in a hunt, and shooting a bear with its head in a bait barrel, or a cougar treed by dogs, does not give them that chance. The Legislature was right to refuse to second-guess the will of the voters, and those who opposed the effort to overturn our vote deserve our profound thanks.

Sincerely,
Glen Tarr

the opportunity to develop a better understanding of our democratic process. By observing Congressional proceedings, questioning journalists and meeting with government experts, the abstracts of history and the process of governing were transformed into concert experiences. In addition, students were able to share their views with their peers from other areas of the country.

Participants returned home with a deeper awareness of their responsibilities as citizens and the realization that a single individual can make a difference. Their enthusiasm for involvement in the democratic process is to be admired.

The Close Up experience was made possible through the strong support of parents, teachers, and schools. Also, various companies and

organizations helped make Close Up fellowships available to students in financial need. These sponsors include a number of local individuals and businesses which support Close Up's work in civic education.

On behalf of all of us at Close Up, I would like to thank all who made the experience possible.

Sincerely,
Kathy McGuigan,
Oregon Outreach Coordinator

perspectives Who Would You Rather Have For A "Founding Father"?

That is, if there were a choice between the two gentlemen discussed last week in this column; Thomas Jefferson, first Secretary of State (1789) and later, President -- and Benjamin Banneker, the free black surveyor, astronomer, mathematician and almanac publisher.

The first man denied to the end the full humanity of the second, though recommending him to President

George Washington for the team to design Washington, D.C.

It is just such a dichotomy in spirit and purpose that incapacitates the good works of well-meaning persons even unto today. We could further evidence the schizophrenia of Jefferson's racism by citing the works of expatriate (Paris) African American author, Barbara Chase-Riboud. "History is legitimacy" she explains, "but that history has been written on one side. Black people were the only people who could not invent themselves as Americans."

Ms Chase-Riboud is, of course, the author of "Sally Hemmings", the novel that fifteen years ago stirred up a nationwide controversy when it detailed so much of Thomas Jefferson's liaison with his black mistress. As detailed in Ebony Magazine the African American descendants of this union years ago formed a cohesive family organization that passes down documents and artifacts from generation to generation and schedules family reunions. (Viking Press-Avon pb.)

How interesting it is that our author, Barbara Chase-Riboud lives in the Paris countryside and that her home overlooks the placid lake where Thomas Jefferson often rowed his black lover, according to Paris newspapers of the time. Chase-Riboud did much of her research in the archives of the French Press; According to their reports, Jefferson not only insisted that Sally Hennings accompany the family on their excursions abroad, but took her on expensive shopping trips (a fascinated public scanned the tabloids for descriptions of the elegant haute couture).

But let us return to the story of Benjamin Banneker, the first black presidential appointee -- and 'our' choice for a "founding father". Rob-

ert, Benjamin's father and a Native of Ghana, West Africa, was awarded his freedom after converting to the Christian religion in Maryland, despite the state's law prohibiting freedom for blacks on such grounds. Robert married a Mary "Banneker" and took her name, having none of his own to give her.

They developed a 102 acre farm, about 10 miles outside Baltimore. Bought for 17,000 pounds of tobacco, the farm became well known for its vegetables, fruits, poultry and honey.

Benjamin inherited the family land and planted wheat for the Revolutionary Army. Later he sold all but his house so that he might devote full time to his astronomy and mathematics. On the basis of such calculations, Banneker correctly predicted that a solar eclipse would take place on April 14, 1789 -- contradicting the forecasts of prominent mathematicians and astronomers of the day.

Have you ever seen a more peculiar preface than this one which the publisher inserted in the front of Banneker's Almanac:

"To whom do you think that you are indebted to for this entertainment? Why, to a Black Man--Strange! Is a Black capable of compiling an almanac? Indeed, it is no less strange than true; and a clever, wise and long-headed Black he is.

The labours of the justly celebrated Banneker will likewise furnish you with a very important lesson. Courteous reader, which you will not find in any other almanac, namely that the Maker of the Universe is no respecter of colours; that the colour of the skin is no way connected with the strength of mind or intellectual powers; that although the God of Nature has marked the face of the African with a darker hue than his brethren, He has given him a soul equally capable of refinement."

Perhaps the final say on the dichotomy in America's peculiar institution of racism should be given to the Rev. Jesse Jackson who had this comment on the recent decision by the U.S. Supreme Court; "if justices Thomas and O'Connor thought Affirmative Action was such a bad idea, they should resign their courtseats--since race and gender had been factors in their appointments." Amen!

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